





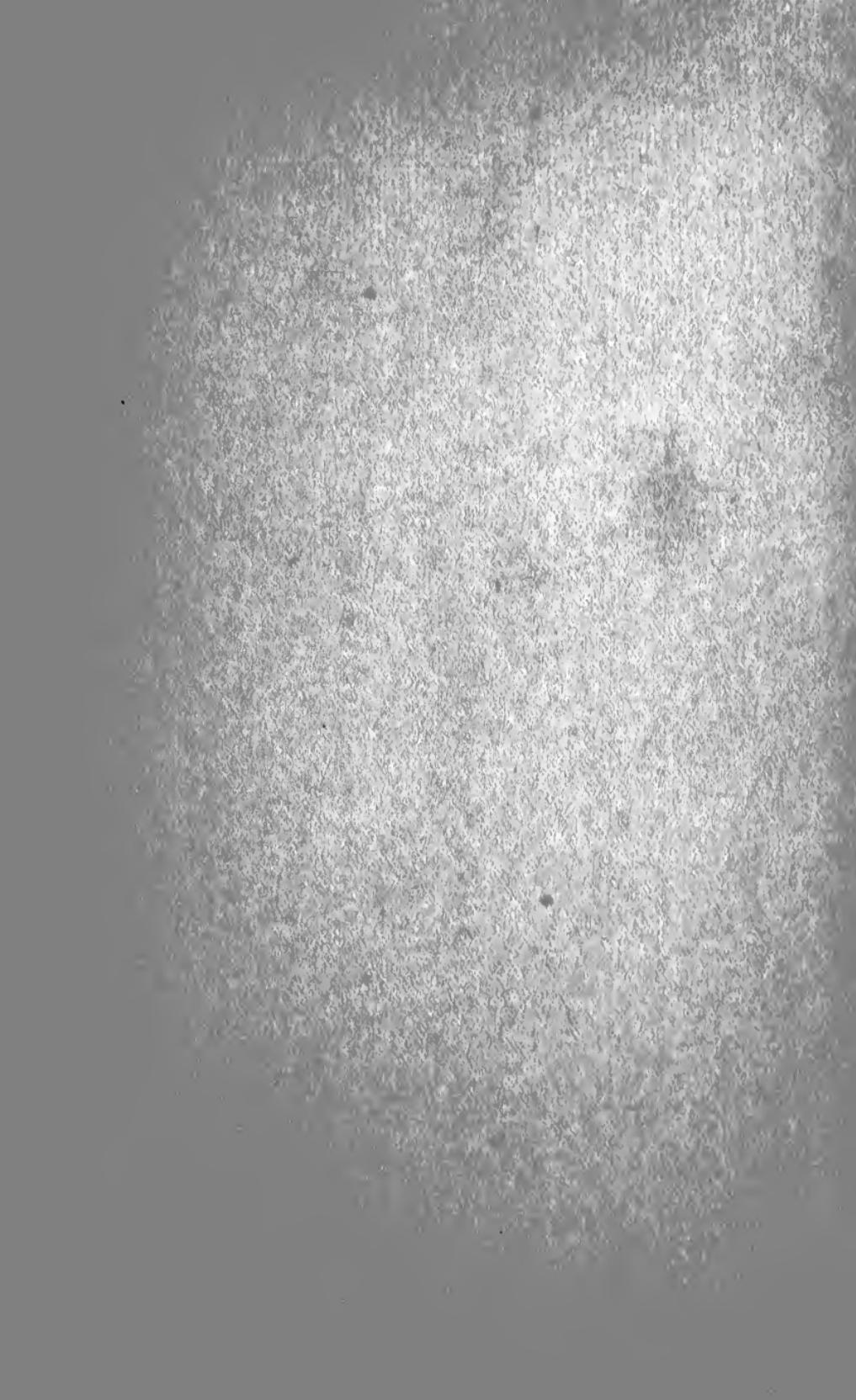
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S I N T R A M

A DRAMA IN BLANK VERSE, IN FOUR ACTS

FROM THE STORY OF THE SAME NAME
BY DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ

BY
FLORENCE E. DE CERKEZ



BOSTON

RICHARD G. BADGER

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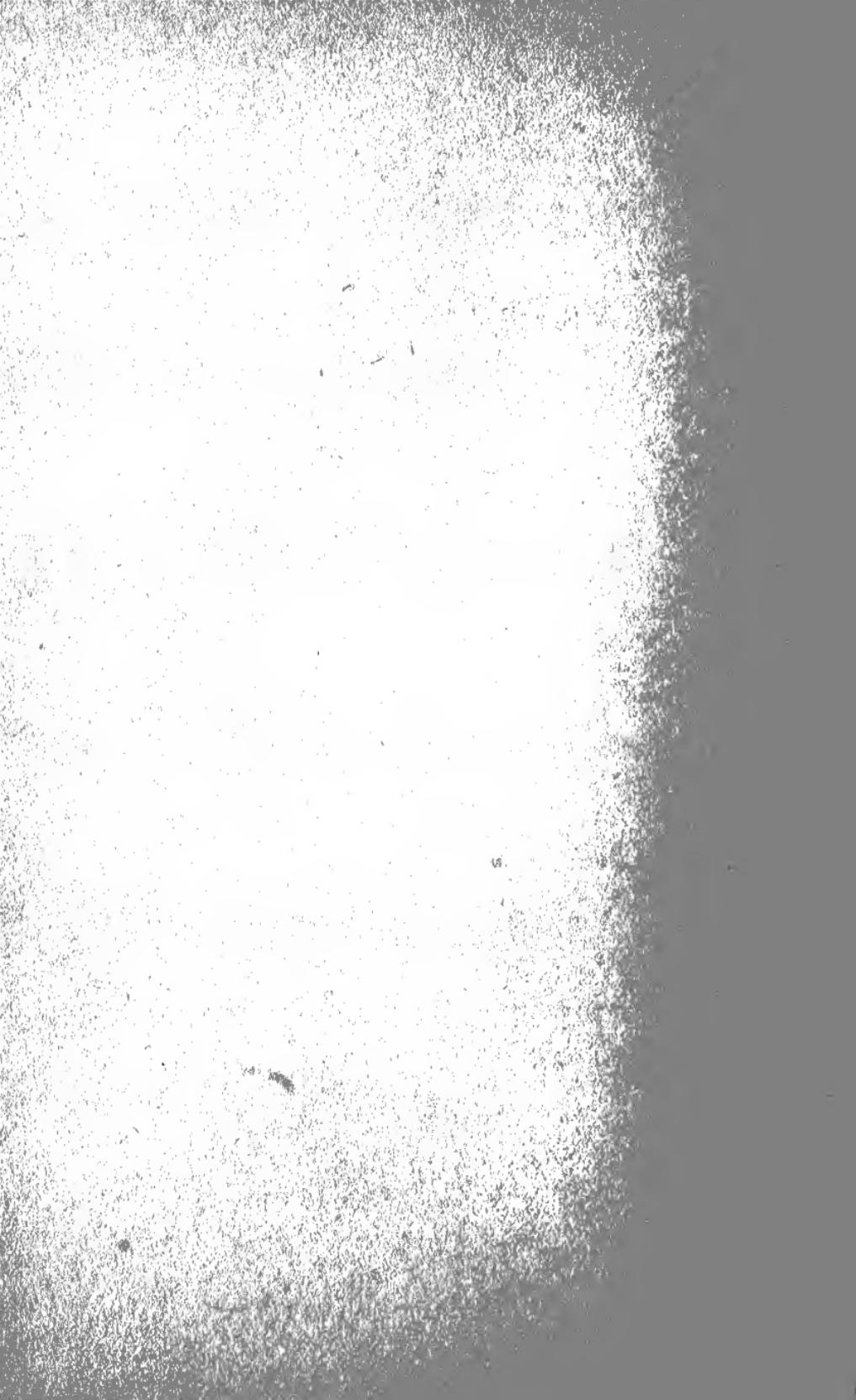
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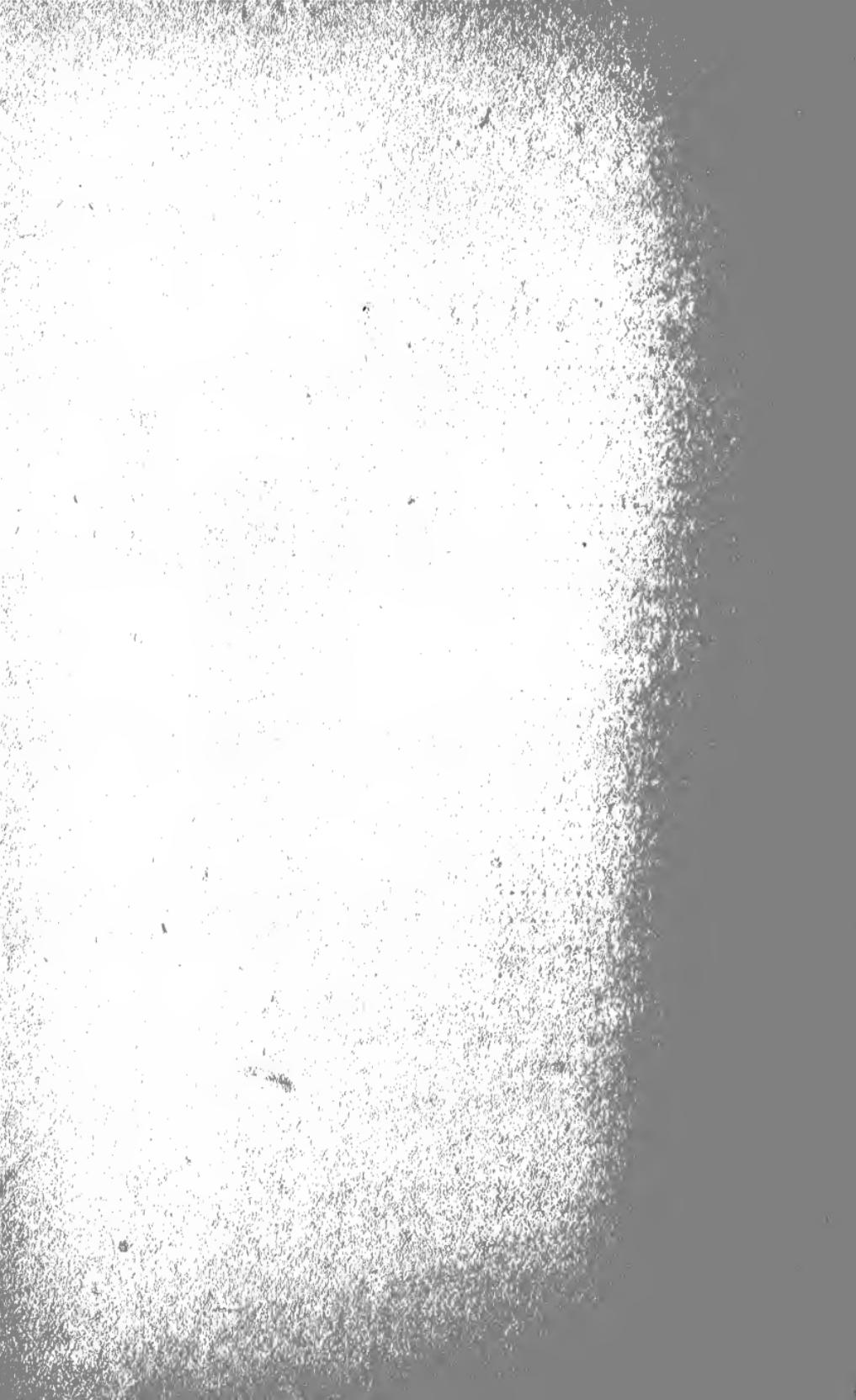
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SINTRAM



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ASMODEUS	
BJORN	Herser of Framness
SINTRAM	His Son
FOLKO OF MONTFAUCON	A Norman Baron
THE PRIOR of the Monastery of Drontheim	
SIR WEIGAND	A Knight
JARL ERIC	The Claimant to the Throne
ROLF	Bjorn's Henchman
THORE HJORT	A Friend of Bjorn's
HAROLD DAGGSON	
IVAR OF FLJOD	
EGIL FAIR-HAIRED	
GOTHARD LENTZ	A Hamburg Merchant
RUDOLPH	His Son
THE WARDER of the Castle of the Rocks of the Moon	
A Page, A Herald, A Squire, The King's Huscarl	
ENGELSTRAM	Son to Montfaucon
VERENA	Wife to Bjorn
GABRIELLE	Wife to Montfaucon
VENUS	
DEATH	
SVEN AND SOTE	Men-at-Arms
THE WARDER OF FRAMNESS..	
Soldiers, Retainers, Armorers, Huntsmen, and Women	
Attendants.	



SINTRAM

ACT I

SCENE I

The Hall at Framness—A low-beamed, primitive, Norse dwelling. Bjorn, Sintram, Harold Daggson, Ivar of Fljod, Egil Fair-Haired, Thore Hjort, the Prior of Drontheim, Verena, and her women.

Bjorn.

We welcome you unto the festal board.
The barbecue has groaned upon the spit
A day and night for this solemnity.
A multitude of slain has made the fold
Lament as Rachel did in Israel—

Prior.

My lord, not in my presence may a jest
However innocently meant, be culled
From Holy Writ.

Bjorn.

This day is not all yours,
Sir Priest, to have us mumbling on our knees
From dawn to midnight.

Verena.

Nay, my lord, I pray,
Show reverence unto the holy man
Who, for the first time doth consent to bless
Our gathering at this the Christmas Feast.

Bjorn.

[*To Verena.*]
Full well you know, my gentle wife, I yield
To your least wish, even to bidding here
A Priest whose meddling tongue will not be staid,

Verena.

[*To Prior.*]
Forgive him, Father, he is over-blunt,
But will not act as fiercely as he speaks.

Prior.

Heaven grant that you be not mistaken, Madam.
[*Enter a Page.*]

Page.

Sir Weigand, noble lord.

[*To Bjorn.*]

Bjorn.

Yea, let him in.
To night, we cancel feuds, and enemies
Shall be sworn brothers while the mead flows
round.

[*Enter Sir Weigand, clad as a pilgrim, with
dead men's bones sewed on the edge of his
gown.*]

Verena.

Heaven, Sir Knight, what senseless prank is this,
That you are come to scare like idle boys
About their games those who are gathered here?

Bjorn.

Weigand the Slender, doff those dead men's bones
And do not play the madman at the board.

Prior.

Lady Verena pales.

Weigand.

Good night to all.

I am no madman——

Bjorn.

[*To Sintram.*

Do you blench at this?

You were not fathered by a chicken-heart
To start at mummers thus. What ails you, boy?

Sintram

I am not craven-hearted, but meseems
I have beheld this man upon the wild.

Bjorn.

He should not startle sparrows on the bough.

Sintram

[*To Weigand.*

Ill did you serve me yester-eve again.

Weigand.

I do not know at all of what you speak.

Verena.

Why do you, Weigand, thus pursue my son?

Bjorn.

Verena, plead not with him in a voice
So near to tears, or else I shall believe
That yonder gage of twenty wedded years
Has not effaced his image from your heart.

Prior.

[*To Bjorn.*

Now shamefully do you entreat your wife,
To bring upon her face that sudden glow
As of a lily in the morning light.

Weigand.

[*To Prior.*

Oh! let him be. Young Sintram, I must beg
You will believe me: Neither yester-eve,
Nor yet the day you spoke of, long before,
Did I, upon the wild, or on the height,
Or on the lonely village path that leads
To yonder mountain-top, behold you, speak,
Or otherwise encounter such a form
As yours.

Rolf.

[*To Sintram.*

Yet such as he you then described.

Bjorn.

Faugh! Do you tremble? Out upon you, Son!

Sintram.

At sight of him, unreasoning terror chills
My very blood. Will you once more deny
The meeting me upon the winter wold?
I first espied a pine tree in the snow,
Whose shadow crossed my path; and as I turned
My horse's head to round it, Lo, I saw
The cursèd robes with those grim crackling bones,
And, "Wilt thou let me ride?" he said, the while
A foamy lather creamed my good steed's flank;
And Skovemark, faithful dog, with ear and tail
Down-drooping cowered. "Low bred animals,
That shake and cower," he outcries in scorn.
And I replied: "Full-blooded though they be,
I should not cut in fairness dog or horse,
For quaking at such fellowship as thine."
Then up he leaps, and rides with me a space,
His icy arms around my body claspt,
And such a cold upon me as the North
Has never blown into a Norseman's veins.
"Press not so close upon me," then I said,
"I press not yet upon thy heart," said he.

Weigand.

I never spoke the words you say I did,
And never rode with you. Look at me, boy,
For mine is not the face you saw that day.

Bjorn.

Bethink thee, Sintram, for he is so frail,
With that his foolish prayer and fasting—

Prior.

Bjorn!

Bjorn.

I meant not to offend, but only thought
Weigand the slender was a sorry sight
Thus to unman the son of Fiery Bjorn.

Sintram.

I stand corrected, for I do believe
There is another on the mountain side.

Rolf.

How did that awful ride come to an end?

Sintram.

Long frozen shadows stretched upon the ground
While Fear, whose name I did not know before,
Seized me,—a shrouded wilderness behind,
And that Companion pillioned on my seat!
Above, upon the mountain top, the pines,
Like mourner's veils, darkened the gloaming sky,
And then I heard the bell of Nidaros,
As many beats as counted twenty years.

Bjorn.

Odd entertainment for a Christmas Eve!
Your brooding notions ill beguile the time,
For you have conjured, with your damsel tales,
The motley guest that robbed you of your pluck.
I half believe the lash were good for you,
With which you did not dare chastise your dog.

Sintram.

Then woe unto the hand that raised the lash!

Weigand.

Now I have stirred up strife between you two.

Bjorn.

Your presence here has never boded peace.

Weigand.

Yet for the sake of peace I came, alas!

Bjorn.

You might have worn your ordinary clothes.

Prior.

Forbear, my lord, Sir Weigand made a vow.

Bjorn.

I care not for his vows, he is a fool.

Prior.

Sir Weigand, you have trod with humble feet
The stern paths of repentance. It were well
Our Herser and his guests should know the cause—

Verena.

Perchance it were not well to tell the tale.

Weigand.

If you command me to be silent, then
Torture shall never wring a word from me;
But, lady, if I have your leave to speak—

Bjorn.

[*To Prior.*

Did I not say we never could have joy,
But with your cant and nonsense you must break
Into the very revels of the Yule?

Verena.

I would not cross the Father's orders, Sir,
He has instructed you to speak. But I
Whose presence does but add to his distress, [*Pointing to Weigand.*]

[*To Bjorn.*

My Lord, crave your permission to retire.

[*Exit Verena and the women.*

Sintram.

A secret understanding seems to bind
My Mother to Sir Weigand——

Rolf.

Ah, young Sir,
Would you suspicion cast upon a saint?

Sintram.

I sooner would believe a breeze should melt
The unscaled buttresses of yonder peak.
But he, the Pilgrim of the dead men's bones,
He fills me with misgiving. Who is he?
My Mother would not willingly give ear
To his confession. Sawest?

Rolf.

Your Mother, Sir,
Will not be present when the evil rites

That stain your Christmas Festival begin.
Those empty armours in whose blackness sit
Infernal spirits of your ancestors,—

Sintram.

Thou hast beheld them and art still alive?

Rolf.

And Frey's gilt boar head, upon which you swear,
You and your godless kinsmen, to perform
Deeds at whose dire rehearsal all the saints
And all the angel host in Paradise
Must stop their ears.

Sintram.

You never knew the thrill
Of warrior bosoms, when the sounding mail
Grows red, and hurling down the shaggy cliffs
Corpse upon corpse dyes all the brackish foam.
Poor Rolf the Good, you cannot know the leap
Of fighters' souls sped on to Odin's Halls,
For you will tamely crawl into your heaven,
Propped up by guardian angels till you die.

Rolf.

O Pagan still!

Bjorn.

Well, we await the tale
You have selected for rehearsal, Sir,
Before the Minstrel strikes his string to themes
More suited to the tenor of the day.

Weigand.

Bjorn of the fiery eyes, mild speech for you!
I was not always thus obliged to bow
Before your fierce upbraiding. I was free
To range the forest in the lordly hunt,
And lead my yeomen to the martial field.
Nor you nor I were silvered on the pate
With frost of many winters then, Sir Bjorn.
I loved a maiden who returned my love——

Bjorn.

You need not harp too long upon that chord.

Weigand.

Far be it from me now to make a boast.
We walked, the maid and I, upon a slope,
All pied with colors like an altar cloth,
And the lush grass was soft beneath our tread;
Then she espied a lamb that far had strayed.
From its dull brethren, and she took it up,
Was going home to make a pet of it,
When the rough shepherd in his coat of skins,
Came, hot and breathless and ill-tempered too,
From seeking long for it o'er hill and dale:
He spoke in anger, I in anger struck,
And poured his life out on the meadow grass.
The little lamb hid bleating in her robe,
She raised it to her bosom, turned to me:
“Take from my sight thy blood-stained hand,” she
said,
“And never stand before my face again.”

I saw but Death in all my wanderings. Death
Stood by my pillow,—Death upon the wind
Rode like a phantom—

Bjorn.

Sintram, white again!

Sintram.

There is another on the mountain side.

Weigand.

Till the good Prior bid me take the garb
That now I wear, and seek the way to Rome.
Through penance merciless, I won the name
Our host in irony bestows on me.

Bjorn.

Weigand the Slender, little comeliness
Was left upon thee to delight the eye
That erst beamed kindly.

Weigand.

Little as you say.

Bjorn.

Ungraceful were it when the better part
Fell to me (as the fair Verena's love
Changed like the waning moon and favored me),
That I should grudge you, Weigand.

Weigand.

Love has passed
And lusty life has passed; I see the shades
Grow long upon the road.

Sintram.

Another word
Of your grim fantasies, and I shall stick
My dagger in you, Palmer though you be.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The Same

[Enter a *Page*.

Page.

[*To Bjorn.*

Will you receive Jarl Eric's messenger?
I told him you were merry on this night,
And he should wait until tomorrow morn,
But he declares his business will not wait.

[*Bjorn assents with a gesture.*

[*Exit Page, enter Herald.*

Herald.

Good morrow, Sir—Bjorn of the Fiery Eyes,
Jarl Eric's greeting. He would know at once,
Without preamble, speech, or circumstance,
If you will yield him fealty, your liege
Proclaim him, and the tribute pay
Which he demands, or else, on Niflung's Heath,
(The burial place of heroes who in fight
Fell when the earth was new,) encounter him
With all his force that swords may arbitrate.

Bjorn.

When the spring thaw makes fighting possible,
We'll meet in full array on Niflung's Heath.

Leave not so curtly, man. Fill him a cup,
And when he sees the bottom, fill again
With this.

[*He tosses a purse to the Herald.*

Herald.

Thanks, Lord.

[*Enter Asmodeus.*

Asmodeus.

A doughty challenge this.
To worst Jarl Eric is no easy task.
I never saw the arrow, blade, or spear
Could make him turn.

[*Exit Herald.*

Bjorn.

We know our king of old,
But have not yet, more than our mountain oaks,
Learned how to bend. We break, we berserkers,
If strained beyond resistance,—that is all—
And shiver into splinters, with a crash
That sounds in Hell.

[*The helmets and coats of mail and weapons
on the wall are illuminated with red light.*

Asmodeus.

Your forbears come to nod
Approval of the threat.

Rolf.

[*To Sintram.*

Said I not so?

Thore.

We thought to round a living circle, Bjorn,
And not to feast with ghouls.

Sintram.

What evil power
Is in the man, to summon spectres thus?
A horrible misgiving seizes me.

Egil.

The bane of evil deeds is on the house,
That e'en the Holy Season does not lift.

Harold.

No harm will come to him whose hands are clean.

Thore.

Who is that man? [To *Sintram.*
[Mail lights up again.

Asmodeus.

[To *Sintram.*
See, see, your ancestors!

Sintram.

I do not know. [To *Bjorn.*] Sir, did you see
him come? [Bjorn shakes his head.

Asmodeus.

From their remote and sleepless lair they rise,
As Perseus scales the zenith, to be here
At your carouse, and pass the jovial cup——

Sintram.

Father, I shall go mad if I behold
The grinning visages of yonder ghosts.

Prior.

I see no spectres, Sintram, calm thyself.

Sintram.

There sits bold Rollo who to plunder France,
Withstood the saintly arms of mitred Anselm
And there the rover who on vineland's shores
Fought red men and was buried in his mail. . . .
Hastings who burned Amboise, and who was borne
A seeming corpse, right into Luna's fane,
With all his men, a funeral train well armed,
Till, springing from the bier, he ripped his shroud,
And at the altar laid the Bishop low.
Iona's conqueror, Turges, shows the wounds
That slew him at his bridal; Ingjald glares
As when he fired his hall and choked his guests
Amid the flames to seize upon their lands.
Godfrey sits there who bearded Charlemagne,
And last of all, Bjorn of the raven wing,
With aspect sinister, the grizzly claw
Upon his shoulder, [*To Bjorn*] as it is on yours.

Bjorn.

This is another phantom of your brain.

[*Lights disappear.*

Asmodeus.

Such lineage is a guerdon of success.
Yet if you'll let me teach you how to beat

Your ploughshares into swords, I'll be the smith
Will fashion weapons at whose sight the foe
Shall hesitate to meet you on the field.

Bjorn.

I thank you for the offer, but decline
To take advantage of my enemy.

Thore.

Bjorn, who is this?

Bjorn.

My friend, I cannot tell.
I saw him only when he spoke, nor yet
His features well discern; the twisted horn
Upon his helmet hides his visage;—Stay!
I fancy I beheld him as I bent
One day upon a running brook to drink.
My own distorted image in the wave
Deceived, no doubt.

Egil.

Your guest did not disarm
When he sat down.

Bjorn.

[*To a squire.*

How did a visitor
Armed cap-a-pie, unchallenged take a seat?

Warder.

For fifty years I've kept a faithful watch
Upon your gates, and never in that time
Has any caught me napping. Take my word,

That ugly fellow is no common man.
 You saw the golden horn upon his head?
 He blew a blast of it before the doors,
 And they flew open of their own accord.

Sintram.

Shame on thee! Has the wassail wrought so soon?
 I'll clear thy fuddled brain. [*He raises his fist.*]

Warder.

True son of Bjorn.

Rolf.

What angers thee, my Sintram, wroth so near
 The hour when Seraph voices sing of peace.

Sintram.

I heard but now the woe of evil ire,
 Yet straight the fury catches at my throat
 When I am thwarted, prompting murderous
 thoughts.

[*The Minstrel begins to play the "Venite adoremus."* Asmodeus mingles with the crowd and disappears.

Prior.

I do not like the semblance of that man.

Sintram.

[*To Rolf.*
 Go seek him quickly, he must still be near.

Prior.

I'll go with you, I do not like the man.

[*Exeunt Prior and Rolf.*

[*Enter Frey's boar head in procession, an apple in its mouth, garlands around it, the tusks gilt, and the four gilt feet on the dish.*

Bjorn.

Now, noble warriors, make your solemn vows.
Though much has faded, like a pennon left
To sear and tatter in the angry blast,
Some shreds of ancient custom still remain;
Nor have the prating priests as yet o'erthrown
The Odin worship in our fathers' land.
Here let us swear to do the brilliant deeds
Of bold prowess that gilds their memory.

Egil.

I swear to waste and harry all the coast,
Come this a twelvemonth, till I shall have heaped
A pile of gold as high as to my beard
On Balder's altar that still stands at Hove.

Harold.

I swear to scatter all the prying monks
That fatten on the glebes of Roga land,
To raze their walls until they level are
With native dust, and burn the musty scrolls
That work their spells against the ancient faith.

Bjorn.

I hereby swear to drown these halls in blood,
These very halls, if ever Hamburger

Sets foot within them with his merchant crew
Who filch all honor from brave deeds of arms.

[Enter *Prior* and *Rolf*.]

Rolf.

The stranger whom we sought has disappeared.

Prior.

A barbarous scene, and most unknightly vow!

Bjorn.

This is no place for men as good as thou.

Prior.

Bjorn, thou dost top the worst of bygone sins
With this.

Bjorn.

Put not my patience to the test,
Sir Priest.

Prior.

I'll put thy manhood to the test.

Egil.

Away! We will not have a homily!

Harold.

Or we shall din the vespers on thy crown.

Prior.

Whatever be your rage, I will not flinch,
But here pronounce your purpose impious.

*Harold.**[To Sintram.*

Now, do you give a warrant to these words?

*[Draws.**Sintram.*

Silence! Whoever bares the steel shall learn
The weight of Sintram's blade.—[They fall back.]
I, so far, have not known what any man
Obtained by threat or insolence of me.

Bjorn.

Fine valor, worthy better object, son.

Sintram.

Wouldst thou allow his consecrated head
To fall before the onset of these boys?

Ivar.

He calls us boys who are his elders, Ha!

Thore.

Perchance he contemplates a holy life,
And would not have us hard upon his kind.

Prior.

He might do worse than be a holy man;
Nor shall I cease from saying what I should,
Were this my latest word. You sin.

Bjorn.

Refrain:

I will not be dictated to by thee,
Though all thy betters on their bended knee,
As thick as on Cathedral doors, should bid it.

Prior.

My betters bearded yours long since and won.
Long have your Odin's sacrilegious rites
Been, by the Church, put under strictest ban,—

All.

Kill him! Sacrilegious! Kill him, now!

Bjorn.

Then hear me, Priest: I spurn your puny cries.
And fettering to me with an iron bond
The martial oath you heard me just pronounce—
By Death and Sin I swear to keep the vow,
And as a guerdon,—proffer this, my son.

Sintram.

I'll be a willing witness to the deed.

Prior.

God help you both.

[Enter Page.

Page.

Two men are at the gate,
And crave admittance.

Bjorn.

We have guests enough
To mar the merry-making with their jars,
Like instruments ill-tuned that play awry.
Who are they?

Page.

That I know not.

Bjorn.

Find it out.

[*Exit Page, and re-enters immediately.**Page.*

Rudolph and Gothard Lentz, two Hamburgers,
Wrecked with their goods upon the coast, implore
A shelter of your mercy.

Bjorn.

Hamburgers!

Sintram.

When I stood sponsor to my father's oath,
I scarcely thought so soon it would mature.

Prior.

Withdraw thy wicked oath and save thy soul.

Thore.

The wreck has not gone to the bottom yet;
Our ships may get their beaks into her side
And suck good meat.

A Man.

I'll thank them for a coat;
This tattered jerkin has seen better days.

Sintram.

We waste our time in talk, rush out and strike.

Prior.

Art thou in such a hurry to be doomed?

Bjorn.

The mountain bear will share his trackless realm
With his own kind; but if a lesser beast
Break on his bounds, he crushes it to death.
I thank thee, Odin, thou has heard my prayer:
My hand is on the hilt, and I will spill
The lives of these two men whom thou hast thrown
Into my way. Arm! Arm!

[*They arm.*

Sintram.

Make haste.

All.

Haste! Haste!

Bjorn.

Who comes into the Bear's den meets the bear.

[*They rush to the doors.*

CURTAIN

SCENE III

The Court of Framness

Gothard and Rudolph Lentz are discovered defending themselves from the furious onset of Bjorn and his followers.

[Enter Asmodeus, unobserved.

Bjorn.

Fasten the gates and ring the bell. “The Bear”
Our battle-cry!

Sintram.

Upon them, Ho!

All.

The Bear!

Gothard.

Will you thus treat poor helpless travellers?

Rudolph.

[*He falls on his knees.*

Spare, spare my father, strike me if you will.

Gothard.

We must have fallen on a haunted place
Where devils hold their midnight orgies,—

[All rush upon them. Weigand takes up a scythe to hold off the assailants, Rolf and the Prior interpose to protect the victims. Asmodeus is at the head of the onslaught. Suddenly a window opens above the court, and shows the figure of Verena lighted from within.

Verena.

Help!

O pitying Heaven!

Egil.

I saw them pass, but where?

Thore.

Here, Hamburger, take that. *[Strikes a retainer.*

1st Retainer

You miss your aim!

2nd Retainer

Dog, thou shalt die. *[Strikes Egil.*

Egil.

Thou strikest in the dark.

Harold.

A sable fume, enfolding, dims my sight.

Thore.

Your magic blinds us, wizard Hamburgers.

[The armed warriors, struck with blindness, turn on each other in the dark, the gates, miraculously unbarred, fly open of their own accord.

Rudolph.

Although it seems that to unhallowed beings
The place is given up, an angel deigns
Protect us still. Thou lovely guardian, thanks.
And when thou wingest back to Paradise,
Remember us.

[*Exeunt Rudolph and Gothard.*

[*Sintram has stood as in a trance from the moment Weigand took up the scythe. He now looks towards the open gates with joy.*
Exit Asmodeus.

Sintram.

The gates are wide, they're saved.
[*Gates close and retainers disperse.*

Rolf.

We have your mother, Sir, to thank for this.

Prior.

Divine assistance is vouchsafed to them,
They are unscathed.

Bjorn.

They have escaped.

Sintram.

[*With sudden recollection.*] Ah me!
Come Sin and Death, since I must suffer for it.

Weigand.

Talk not so wildly.

Sintram.

I must answer this.

Bjorn.

I do repent me that I swore the oath.

Prior.

Had I been there when you pronounced that oath
 I should have stayed you; but the words were said
 As I returned from seeking that dark man
 Of evil countenance, who came again
 To cry for murder—and once more hath fled.
 Have naught to do with him. I must away.
 The morrow's dawn is holy. Much were I
 To blame if it should find me so removed
 From fitting place as to be tarrying here.
 Bjorn, thou hast made a victim of thy son.

[*Exit.*

Thore.

Enough of these enchantments, I am going.

Egil.

I'll come with you.

Thore.

[*To Bjorn.*

The night is at low ebb,
 We should wend homeward, for the Christmas
 Feast
 Calls us to early duties.

Bjorn.

No excuse

Is needed.

Ivar.

We must take our leave, farewell,
Sir Bjorn.

Harold.

We have a long ride home, farewell.
[*Exeunt the Knights.*

Weigand.

Bjorn, thou'l^t somewhere be called to an account
For this night's doing.

Bjorn.

So you be my judge,
I'll not escape the executioner!

[*To Rolf.*

Go with the women!

Rolf.

Speak you thus to me?

[*Exit.*

[*Bjorn turns and faces Sintram.*

Bjorn.

The gods forsake us, Sintram.

Sintram.

Gods and men.

[*Exit Bjorn.*

Weigand.

[*To Sintram.*

Upon the darkness beams a ray of light,
Cast from thy mother's window. Cheer thee, boy.

Sintram.

I thank thee for the word of comfort, Sir;
But were the light a star, that star the sun
It could not thaw the ice about my heart.

Weigand.

Dost thou still fear me?

Sintram.

Now I know there roves
Another like thee, in the desolate dark,
Whose vision is to thine as Death's to Sleep.
But wert thou Sleep, and couldst thou cast thy spell
Upon my wakeful lids, then I should pray
Thy power would steep me in oblivion still,
So that I might escape what is to come.

Weigand.

What do you mean?

[*Several retainers enter during the following dialogue, and assemble near the door.*

1st Retainer.

Now this is sorry cheer.
I had a goodly rib between my teeth
When they began their blind-man's buff, and
dropped
The morsel to my dog.

2nd Retainer.

He has it now.

Sintram.

[*To Weigand.*

If thou wert Sleep, thou'dst wear a poppy crown,
And at thy touch, a mellow-sounding lute
Would make sweet music, while the many chimes
Of dreamland ranged in all the drowsy flowers.—

3rd Retainer.

The ale had never come my way.

1st Retainer.

I doubt

There is some sorcery beneath his mail.

[*Pointing to Sintram.*

2nd Retainer.

If he should hear, thy life's not worth as much
As the good bone that Sven gave to his dog.

Sintram.

If thou wert Sleep, forgetfulness would spread

[*Enter Rolf.*

About thy path and suffering would cease.

Rolf.

[*To Sintram.*

Your lady mother comes to speak with you.

[*Enter Verena, exeunt Rolf and Weigand and Retainers.*

Verena.

Oh, Sintram!

Sintram.

In my state, if worse could be,
It were to lose your pity, as I shall
When all the truth is told.

Verena.

I know the truth.

Sintram.

And thou dost come to me?

Verena.

I bid thee stand
When I'm away from thee. Let not those Shades
Conquer thee.

Sintram.

What is this? When thou'rt away? ✓

Verena.

My son, my son, that holding in my arms
I sang to as the house grew dark and slept;
Whose heated forehead, when the fever flushed,
I cooled, and felt the burn in my own hand! . . .
Sickened with anxiousness, I've nursed the strength
Back to thy weakened sinews. I have fought
The slightest ill that threatened thee, and prayed
That I might bear it, so that thou wert spared.

Sintram.

My good is thine, the evil is my own.

Verena.

I readily will give my life for thee—
And him whom all these years I called my lord.

Sintram.

Thy life! Thou shalt not go! Wilt thou be
stabbed
On some stone altar in the haunted woods,
And offer thy pure blood a sacrifice
For all thy husband's grievous sins and mine?

Verena.

Nay, satisfaction has been offered once
For every sin repented, but I fear
Heaven's kindled anger at this heinous blot,
And to appease a just Divinity
I'll take the vows renouncing even thee.
Of Bjorn's contrition I shall wring consent.

Sintram.

Leave us not, of thy pity, lest the curse
That is suspended fall and drag us down.
For thou departing, evil here holds sway.
This homestead, whose strong frame withstands the
blast
Of ocean, then will crumble day by day,
Declining like my father in his prime.
The deadly nightshade in our corridors
Will climb and blossom; bats about the rooms
Will wheel as in a belfry when its voice
Rusts with too long disuse, and owls that peep
From hollow trees, perching upon the beams
Will hoot, and wing their flight about the Hall.

Verena.

Worse tenants than thou speak'st of occupy
Thy father's dwelling, Sintram, at this hour.
As I looked down upon the hellish sight,
Our men, like furious demons, aiming death
At unoffending strangers, and thy Sire
Commanding murder, in the throng there passed
Two figures far more terrible than all.
Not Bjorn with bloodshot eyes and thirsty steel,
Not those rough brutish men-at-arms, like hounds
Set on the antlered quarry, while the mort
Dins at its ear, filled me with dread as they.

Sintram.

I cannot well endure to hear of it,
For every word is retribution—dread—
Nay, mortal terror such as man should know
But at the voice of doom, and scarcely then.

Verena.

Such as a man should know but in the face
Of sin! One of those visitors I saw,
Flashed by a torch: I straight thought of the snake
Whose carven coils surround the Chapel porch.

Sintram.

Forbear, I do beseech.

Verena.

Sintram, thou'rt sick!

Sintram.

And little like to mend.

Verena.

My son, you must not yield to wild wood fears.

Sintram.

Oh, leave me not!

Verena.

Yea, thou must fight alone.

Sintram.

If thou depart, Hell holds its revels here.

Verena.

My days and nights shall flow in orison.
And when the battle goes against thee, son,
Think of my supplication raised for thee.

[*Exit Verena.*

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

A Room at Framness.

Sintram and Asmodeus.

Sintram.

You did not say a word on entering,
And without courtesy you left the Hall.

Asmodeus.

I came to render service, took a place
Where bidden by your men.—I overheard
The challenge of Jarl Eric, and I felt
A friendly interest,—I know his strength,
And offered to assist in forging arms.

Sintram.

Your weapons have been judged too murderous.
Did not the laws of hospitality
Forbid requiring of a guest his name,
I should be less discreet.—A strange unrest
Possesses me. Our forest denizens
Are said to show such signs at the approach
Of preying fangs.

Asmodeus.

Unfair comparison!
Such restlessness affects the warrior's heart

When worthy conflict's near, or blooded steeds
That champ and snort before the clarion peal.

Sintram.

See through the grey clouds how the dawn peeps out.
I have not slept or eaten, and I feel
Athirst and weary, not disposed for battle.

Asmodeus.

The remnants of the banquet still invite,
Through yonder open door, then let me bring
The brimful horn that stands there, with a piece
Of broken bread.—

Sintram.

The hour of twelve is past;
To break the fast would render me unfit
For this great day's devotion.

Asmodeus.

Unfit! You?
Why what could make you any more unfit?

Sintram.

Harking to you.

Asmodeus.

Compunction of a child,
That dare not touch lest he be switched for it.

*[Asmodeus runs in and fetches a drinking horn
from the Hall.]*

The ill-fated boar's head still adorns the board.
Come, Sintram, drink the Brage-Cup with me,
The sacred cup of vows none dare forswear,
And you shall reap advantage of the bond.

Sintram.

[*Looking away.*] Methought I saw the Crazy
Pilgrim pass
He held a glass between his hands and went
With the slow pace of death.

Asmodeus.

Long fast and watch
Have been too much for you, your strength is spent,
Your brain whirls idly round an idle theme.

Sintram.

Thou dost unnerve me with that stony glare.

[*Gazing into the air.*
I hear the rattle of the dead men's bones
That edge thy gown, and the wide vault is spanned
As by a lurid rainbow, with the blade
That looms upon thy scythe.

Asmodeus.

He will not harm,
You are but young and Death is not for you.
There is a stretch of happiness unrolled
Beneath your feet if you will tread on it.

[*Music.*
Yours the long days that from her distaff spins
The hooded Fate, to seize on if you will;

Yours torchlit nights of joyous banqueting,
And all the beauties of the open field;
The sun on croft and mead, the flashing brooks
That yield their scaly wealth, the heavy corn,
With promises of plenty, and the kine

[*Music ceases.*]

That lowing homeward wend at close of day.

Sintram.

I never knew that these were yours to give.

Asmodeus.

The kingdoms of the earth were granted me.
I give them to my liegemen as I list.

Sintram.

I'm not your liegeman.

Asmodeus.

Are you sure of that?

[*Music.*]

Mine is the languor of the summer heat
That drops upon the sense like honeyed ale;
I thrill the music of the thrush's throat,
Till all th' intoxicated wood's afire,
Inform the very wind with rapturous joys
That flush the roses' cheek, inspire the night
With whispers scarcely heard, that heave and sigh
[*Music ceases.*]
Through the o'erweighted bosom of the boughs.—

Sintram.

Art thou a bard?

Asmodeus.

Thou oft hast to thy harp
Sung words like these.

Sintram.

I know them for mine own.
All things must evil be, since all are thine.

Asmodeus.

They are but evil if I breathe on them.

Sintram.

I then renounce them, I will never joy
In aught on which thou breathest to defile.

Asmodeus.

But there are other glories in the world.
Wilt thou renounce the warrior's stern delights,
And take no pleasure in the paths of war?

Sintram.

These are not thine.

Asmodeus.

Think'st thou? Although I grant
There often is a virtue in your swords
To win true honors and to heal true woes,
Yet is not mine the outcome in the end?

Sintram.

I will not hear you. There is nothing left
If this be nought. I will do battle still.

Asmodeus.

You show yourself true Norseman, worthy a quaff
Of Walhall's nectar from your foeman's skull.
And you shall ride, the Valkyr's horse, swept up,
Dishevelled by the tempest, take by storm
A hero's seat, and watch the unfinished fight.

Sintram.

So will I, and perchance without your leave.

Asmodeus.

But I can help you to a glorious fate.

Sintram.

If I could see the limbs of Arinbjorn
Feasting the eagles, I would willingly
Dash to destruction,—

Asmodeus.

Hide in ambuscade
Among the coast rocks, close on his domain,
And send a handful of your comrades out
To lead the chase across his fields of corn.
When your old enemy appears, burst forth,
And force him to the battle unprepared.

Sintram.

I would not steal from an unthinking foe
My earliest bays.

Asmodeus.

He surely will be armed,
And will but yield to *you* the victory
You else must be content to share with Bjorn.
You shall be knighted on the battle field,
As he rides up on hearing of the deed.

Sintram.

I am advised, and so I will command.
If there be any sooth in prophecy,
I'll drink with you the friendly cup of wine,
That makes all resolutions binding.

Asmodeus.

Drink,
And sorrow dies. Drink! And the world's a
dream!

[*They drink.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE I

Spring.

A bay in the Fjord. A mass of rocks conceal those on shore from sight to seaward.

Sintram, Harold Daggson, Ivar of Fljod, Egil Fair-Haired and Thore. [They lie in ambush.] In a group further off Sven, Sote and retainers.

Harold.

Our scouts report the ship of Arinbjorn
Is steering round the ness; 't will soon be here.
And little does he guess whom he will meet.
Our chase of yesterday upon his lands,
Through standing corn, upsetting dairy pans,
And scattering herds, the hounds full cry on them,
Have worked desired effect, and he has come
In secret haste to be avenged on Bjorn
Whose crest was seen among your followers.

Sintram.

We'll stitch it on the lining of our coats,
When we have learned to stand in awe of him.

Egil.

Well said. My father cried, "A boyish prank,
But if the bilious wrath of Arinbjorn
Be cleared by racing after madcap boys,
Perhaps the neighborhood may be at peace,
Until he find some other cause of ire."

Sintram.

There's more in this, for Arinbjorn and I
Have sworn a death feud; I dispatched a man
He sent to rob us, and shall only sleep
Secure from him when I am in my grave.

Ivar.

Well, I should offer it to him instead.

Sintram.

We all may ride the Valkyr's steed tonight.

Harold.

Yet I prefer to ride my chestnut mare.
Sintram, you're in a very sombre mood
And brood on death,—

Ivar.

Although you here command
Four Viking's sons.

Sintram.

There have been many crowned
Who led a berserk course when scarce fifteen,
Younger than I by near ten years; 't were well
You were more wary of an evil name.

Ivar.

What name?

Sintram.

Why that by which you called your Sire.

[Ivar puts his hand to the hilt.

Put up your sword. The name of Viking, once
A glorious title, now that one is King
Who fleshed his steel in a marauder's cruise,
Stands not in good repute.

All.

What say you, eh!

Sintram.

It is well known, Jarl Eric, by the fall
Of Olaf Trygvesson, our former King,
In the great fight at Svolder, won a crown
Which is not recognized throughout the land,
Since Sweyn and Earling Skjalgsson share with him.
And well he feels the royal honors sit
But awkwardly upon him, for he clings
To the good name of Jarl, is not called king,
And watches as a wolf the guarded fold,
The sumptuous court that Skjalgsson holds at Sole.

1st Retainer.

More than two hundred trained huscarls, they say,
Compose his retinue, strong to uphold
His fresh won crown against a rival claim.

2nd Retainer.

And wondrous hoard is in his treasure house,
Plunder of cities of the foreign seas.

Egil.

From Greekland he has jewels rich and rare,
Such as the Empress Theodora wore,
Strung at her temples, flowing from her neck
Upon her bosom; armlets that would pay
The ransom of all Trondelag,—

3rd Retainer.

And gold
In vaulted rooms,—

Harold.

His palace hall is filled
With tapestries and hangings, torn away
From many a Christian fane, and silver plate
From many an altar.

Sintram.

He should restore
The stolen treasures to their owners then,
Since he is grown so wonderfully good.

Sote.

The thefts were not all his, and who shall tell
Amid our many raids on southern coasts
Whence such a gem or such a Pix was taken?

Sintram.

I never yet set sail to southern seas.

Sven.

Saw you the fight at Svolder?

[*To Harold.*

Harold.

I was there.

We headed west towards Bergen, till we made
The isle of Borgund where the allied fleets
Were stationed to attack us,—Swedes and Danes,
Under their kings, Sigvalde, the traitor chief,
With his Jomstvikings, and our traitor Jarl,—

Sintram.

Who now is King,—

Harold.

Good Olaf Trygvesson

Was then our King.

Thore.

I too was in that fight.

Eric and Forkbeard, standing on their decks,
Watched our proud forces steering through the
sound,
A string of galleys, bound like shining stars
In one grand constellation. Eric knew
The name of every galley, every man,
And one by one betrayed them to the Dane.

Egil.

If his cold heart at any moment beat
With pity for his own Norwegian kin,
The memory of a father to avenge
Steeled him to play his part.

Sote.

He played it well.

*Sintram.**[To Thore.]*

Jarl Haakon, Eric's father, met his death
In Thora's pig-sty, did he not, my lord?

Thore.

Jarl Haakon paid but little reverence
Unto the marriage vow. He saw a face
That pleased him well, though Flora of Rimul,
His mistress, was a very goodly creature.
This newer fancy was Orm Lyrgia's wife;
And burning with the outrage, furious Orm
Led out a host of bonders like himself,
Roused to protect the sacred Balder's pyre,
Their hearthstone, and supported by the king,
They pressed on Haakon, into Thora's farm
Whither he'd fled; there in her pig-sty hid,
With Kark his thrall, he heard King Olaf set
A price upon his head. All through the night,
A sputtering drip between them, Jarl and man
Crouched in the stench and breathless dark, and
 strove
To shake off sleep, each by the other's hand
Dreading to fall if slumber mastered him,
And each in turn a prey to hideous dreams,
For they were spent with running through the
 woods.
And either, waking with a sudden start,
Would spread his hand upon a naked blade.
At last, as dawn came sifting through the cracks,
The Jarl lay struggling in a pool of blood,
And Kark crept out to claim a murder's fee.

Ivar.

You long were in the service of the king?

Thore.

Yea, from my youth I was his constant friend.
He was the strongest man I ever knew;
Drew bow with right or left; played with three
spears;

Full often when the rowers were at work,
And his Long Serpent skimmed the frothy waves,
I've seen him take a stride across the side,
And nimbly leap along from oar to oar,
With such quick speed, the sinews of the men
Scarce felt the weight ere he was in his seat.

Sintram.

A very athlete.

Thore.

And withal so kind.
The queen was fretting, she was ever thus,—
One sunny morning, it was early spring,
Thyra lamented that our chilly earth
Yielded such barren fruitage. “Richer far
Her own broad Danish acres. Could not he
Wrest from her uncle those her dower lands
That he had never fought for? Then would come
Ships to Norwegian shores with stores of food.”
While yet she spake, a hawker passed that way,
And called out some green thing she fancied well
Then does our Olaf run into the street,
And quickly buy the stuff to give it her,
Which she, to thank him, throws into his face.

Egil.

Such little things have oft brought on a war.

Ivar.

A sail! A sail!

[*A ship in full sail, makes for the shore.*

Thore.

Is this the king's Long Serpent
Come back to life, a phantom of the deep?
I have not seen her like since she went down.

Sintram.

Conceal yourselves behind these rocks.

Retainer.

She steers
Into the Fjord, and puts her beak to landward.

Sintram.

When they draw up their galleys on the sand,
I'll give the signal, and our cry, "The Bear"
Shall bring their strength to battle array. Leap
out,

As I leap, when I give the cry.

Sote.

My lord,
The dragon is not that of Arinbjorn;
This vessel bears another figurehead,
A woman with a mass of golden hair,
Perhaps Aslauga, the celestial guest
Whom the bard Frodi loved. This, after all,
May be a magic long-boat, fraught with ill.

Sintram.

Is't of your nurse you learned such tales, good
Sote?

Egil.

This is a steady boat from southern seas.

Retainer.

No doubt well freighted with a rich reward
For those who dare possess themselves of it.

Thore.

If I mistake not, I have seen such ships
Upon the waters of the Frankish bays.

Retainer.

My lord, keep watch, and like a fish-hawk swoop.

Harold.

Sintram, you would not rush upon a foe
Without a warrior's warning?

Sintram.

Peace, you fool!

*[Folko of Montfaucon and his men approach
in a landing boat, and begin to disembark.
They do not see the Norsemen.]*

Harold.

Because you are the leader at this hour,
Do not believe I shall give way to you.

Ivar.

I joined you here to fight your enemy,
Not waylay unknown men.

Sintram.

You just have said
Your father was a Viking.

Ivar.

Better days
Have brought a better mind. I will not strike
A band of harmless travellers.

Sintram.

Be gone!
I'm weary of your preaching. They shall pay
The price of having disappointed me.
You all may go, and I will fight alone.
Our Ivar is too good to join us, Sirs;
Let those who feel a mawkish fear creep up
And take no pleasure in a berserk fight,
Pray follow him, for singlehanded, I
Can win the treasures of this Norman ship.

Thore.

Rob unoffending strangers!

[*He tries to detain Sintram who is about to give the signal of attack.*

Sintram.

Stand aside.
For if you leave me not I'll—

Thore.

You will what?

You owe my years a little more respect.
I came to help my old friend's son, young man,
With the experience at my command,
Against his father's lifelong enemy,
And not to play the thief with travellers.
On such a purpose bent, you part from me.

Ivar.

I go with you.

Egil.

And I.

Harold.

And I.

Sven and Sote.

Not we.

Sintram.

[To the departing Jarls.

I'll answer this some other time, my friends.
The Shield Maids hold in midair Sintram's fate,
And he must grasp it ere they let it fall.

Egil.

Thou bloody bear's cub!

Thore.

Son of Fiery Bjorn!

[*Exeunt Thore, Egil, Ivar, and Harold.**Sven.*

My lord, we'll fight for you to our last breath.

Sote.

I speak for all your followers: So will we.

Sintram.

The root red cock of Hell is crowing now
To give the signal. Come, The Bear! The Bear!

[*They attack Montfaucon and his Normans
who are in the act of landing.*

Montfaucon.

We've fallen upon a robber band, Lay on,
And let your battle cry be Gabrielle.

[*Montfaucon and his followers engage Sintram
and his men. Music. The Norsemen as
they fight, sing snatches of the Death-Song
of Ragnar Lodbrok.*

Norsemen.

I hear the Maids of slaughter call,
They bid me forth to Odin's Hall—

Norman.

Gabrielle!

Norsemen.

High seated in their blest abodes,
I soon shall quaff the drink of gods!

Sintram.

The Bear!

Sote.

It seems they are a match for us.

Sintram.

Stand back,

I will engage this hero hand to hand.

[*Several men of Sintram's following fall,
singing snatches of Ragnar's song.*

A Retainer.

The hours of life have glided by;
I fall, but smiling shall I die!

[*Montfaucon engages Sintram.*

Sven.

Sintram is fallen into the trap he set.

Sote.

We're dead if we stay here, make we away.

Retainer.

If we are wise we'll seek another place.

These Normans all have Rollo's Spirit in them.

[*Exeunt Sote, Sven and the retainers carrying
their wounded. Sintram is overpowered by
Montfaucon who strikes the sword from his
hand.*

Montfaucon.

Surrender wild young Northman, I am loath
To shed your life.

Sintram.

I fall, but smiling die.

Montfaucon.

Or look your last upon the light, or yield.

Sintram.

I've not been taught that word.

Montfaucon.

A plunderer's death

Dishonors Folko's steel.

Sintram.

Why do you pause?

Strike! My blood stains not, I'm a warrior's son.

Montfaucon.

This consecrated blade was never used
On an unworthy foe.

Sintram.

Get a fresh sword.

Montfaucon.

[*Standing back.*

Fierce as the eagle, you are bold as he.

[While they have been fighting, the boat in which Gabrielle is being conducted to land comes near, manned with the retainers of Montfaucon who had been left on board the main ship. Gabrielle now appears in the prow, high above the heads of those on the shore.

Gabrielle.

Folko, my knight, you will be merciful.

[*Folko with drawn sword stands between the boat and Sintram.*

Sintram.

[*Approaching Folko.*

The bards sing truly of the Walkyrs, strike!

Montfaucon.

No, make amends for this. You owe your life
To Lady Gabrielle.

[*He points to Sintram's sword which is on the ground.*

Sintram.

Oh! To be borne
To Walhall on her steed!

Montfaucon.

You are misled;
This is the noble dame of Montfaucon,
My Lady true and human. Gabrielle,
You here beheld a trial of arms wherein
Both battle and defeat were but in jest.
This our young kinsman, (for upon his cloak
I saw the sturdy emblem of our house,)
Came out to meet us, but his feigned assault,
Designed to give us martial welcome, seemed
Real to our men, and was received in earnest.

[*To Sintram.*

Was it not so? Support this fable, Sir,
To calm her fears.

Sintram.

If I should dare to raise
My hopes so high, I'd labor to restore
Your confidence by saying I came out
With no intent against you, Montfaucon:
My weapon found a mark I did not aim.

Montfaucon.

Speak no more of it. You've your spurs to win,
[*Low to Sintram.*]
In a just quarrel fight as you did now
And you shall win them.

Sintram.

Lord of Montfaucon,
None before you has overcome my arms,
And your own sword, some day, shall dub me
Knight.
There is no place along this barren shore
Where you can lodge; I know each cove and
shingle.
Will you accept the shelter of our roof?

Montfaucon.

We seek the house of the great Herser Bjorn.
His forefathers were mine, and I have brought
My wife to see the Norsemen's fabled land.

Sintram.

Bjorn is my father, I will take you there.

Montfaucon.

Strange chance, that we should meet thus, brand
to brand.

Gabrielle.

How did it happen that you were informed
Of our arrival, for we sent no word?

Sintram.

The Fates above us, as I stood and saw
The silver spears of morning strike the Fjord,
Showed me a gleaming shield hung in the sky,
And chanted, "Watch, thy fate is kind to thee";
Upon the shield was glassed a wondrous face,
Framed with bright hair, that Frodi, our great
Skald,
Beheld in waking dreams, sun-interwoven.

Montfaucon.

You do not fear these Northern men, my love?

Gabrielle.

When you are at my side, what should I fear?

Sintram.

If you will follow, I will guide you there.
My mother's seat is empty, in the Hall;
But Bjorn will greet you with a joyful heart.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The Hall at Framness.

Montfaucon, Bjorn, Sintram, Gabrielle, and attendants of both houses.

Bjorn.

If forewarned, Cousin, we had offered you
Reception more befitting. Tapestries
Verena hung, for guests, on wall and bench,
And had the tables spread with store of cheer;
While all our neighbors should have graced the
board

In best apparel. I myself had donned
Instead of this rough soldier's cloak
And farmer's garb, my surcoat made of silk,
And leather boots with clanking golden spurs
And helmet gilt.

Montfaucon.

Stand not on ceremony.

Welcome is oft more cordially expressed
By the extended hand of workday use,
Than by an outward show of expectation.

Bjorn.

We're glad to have you here; and whosoe'er
Offers you harm shall die,—Bjorn breaks no oath:
I swear't. Ye all have heard.

Montfaucon.

Thanks, from my heart.

A Retainer.

[*To Montfaucon.*]

My lord, where do you wish us to bestow
The things we carry?

Bjorn.

I will show the way;
So you will not refuse our simple fare.

Sintram.

[*Exeunt Montfaucon, Bjorn, Gabrielle and
attendants.*]

She hangs upon his arm like mantling snow
Upon the mountain's strong and slaty ribs,
Or as a silver-decked, slim-waisted birch
Mingles its foliage with the hemlock's green.
I've seen the slopes of this deep noiseless Fjord
Stripped of their vesture by the battle axe,
And in the clearing, grain, tossed by the wind.
So does my spirit, shorn of martial thoughts,
Bend at her glance. He said to me: "You owe
Your life to Gabrielle," An angel's name—
His who first brought the message of Redemption.
O gracious minister!

[*Enter Asmodeus.*]

Asmodeus.

You do not oft
Indulge in day-dreams.

Sintram.

What have you to do
With dreams of mine?

Asmodeus.

Mere idle inquiry.

Sintram.

You came unbidden to our Yuletide feast.

Asmodeus.

Not altogether unbidden did I stay.

Sintram.

Whence art thou? Answer.

Asmodeus.

Look in yonder shield.

[*He points to a shield on the wall. Sintram looks into it and starts.*

Sintram.

I see myself.

Asmodeus.

A substance corporal
Is granted me when you look at yourself.
Sintram, you drank the loving cup with me,
And sealed a solemn compact hard to break.

Sintram.

Have I not done your bidding: nearly lost
My life and lost my honor?

Asmodeus.

You have won
What is not bought too dear with any loss,
The visit of this Baron to your close
That brings with it a presence very fair.

Sintram.

If you allude to Lady Gabrielle,
I pray you will not mention her to me.

Asmodeus.

A wise request, but beauty, like the sun,
Beams generously and will not be concealed.

[*Sings.*

“Her eyes are blue as larkspur on the Fjeld,
And like the ripened barley gleams her hair.”

[*Enter Bjorn.*

Bjorn.

Why have you summoned back that stranger
Knight?

Sintram.

I never called him, he invites himself.

Bjorn.

[*Apart to Sintram.*

He is unknown to any of our house.
Keep a close eye on him.

Asmodeus.

There is no need,
Good Herser, of surveillance. As a friend
I came one night and gave your son advice
Which he has since seen fit to act upon.

Bjorn.[*To Sintram.*

If you are satisfied, why so am I.
Sintram, I have invited Montfaucon
And Lady Gabrielle to view our lands;
I wait upon them, will you go with us?

Sintram.

I will.

Bjorn.[*To Asmodeus.*

Sir, will you ride?

Asmodeus.

Your humble servant.

Sintram.

I'll order Rimfaxe and another mount.

Asmodeus.

No hand has ever drawn the girth for me.
Saddle your horse, and I will ride my own.

CURTAIN

SCENE III

A Glen above Framness. [Showing waterfall.]
Enter Bjorn, Asmodeus, Sintram, Montfaucon,
Gabrielle and a Page.

Sintram.

[To Page.]

Look to the horses till I call for them.

[To Gabrielle.]

You see why I suggested we dismount.
To ride up here were hard and perilous.
This is the spot where it is said the Troll
That still inhabits yonder waterfall
Under those tumbled stones, killed the young maid.

Gabrielle.

How fierce the spirits of your mountains are!

Bjorn.

What tale of dread were you recounting, boy?

Sintram.

I merely told the story of the Foss.
A maid came out to meet her lover here.
A Troll disguised, who won her for his bride;
But at the trysting place the Troll resumed

His goblin shape and then devoured her.
You see his work, the pile of boulders thrown
Across the stream to make a dwelling place.
Even in the winter silence, when the ice
Upon the water's laughter lays its hand,
You hear the snoring of the Troll below.

Sintram wanders out of sight.

Bjorn.

The Giants sleep in all these fastnesses.

Montfaucon.

You have great need to watch yourselves, thus
ringed
With beings of the nether world.

Asmodeus.

Sintram returns holding up a sword.

[*To Sintram.*]

What have you found among those blighted rocks?

Sintram.

I clambered down the cleft to ascertain
If it were possible to glimpse the Fjord
From the far side; and in the shuffled leaves
Pierced through with sappy shoots, I thought I saw
A glowing coal: I found a buried sword.
So heavy is it, and so ably wrought,
Some godlike hero of the elder days
Must once have owned it. See the carbuncle
That burns upon the hilt. No armourer

Of human cunning ever could anneal
This elfin leafage, and Hispanian smiths
Inlay no purer fillet on blue steel.

Montfaucon.

The characters are Runic. I believe
The Trolls of Iceland in their silver caves
Surely devised them.

Gabrielle.

I have heard a bard
Who struck the harp in halls of Gascony,
Sing of a sword like this.

Montfaucon.

'Twas Frithiof's.

Bjorn.

The saying goes that noble Frithiof
Tempted to slay the King, who through the wood
Was riding with his wife, as you were now,—
(Because Queen Ingeborg and Frithiof
Had weaved together wreaths of early love,)
Ungirt his sword to cut temptation short
And threw it from him. Ring's realm lay out there
Full many a mile to westward. If indeed
This is great Frithiof's Angurwadel, then
He must have hurled it clear across the sea.

[*Sintram girds the sword.*

Asmodeus.

I would not gird that sword if I were you.

Sintram.

Advice, in this resembling alms, my friend,
Is apt to be unwelcome if unasked.

Bjorn.

Lord Montfaucon, if you will follow me
Across a steep and dangerous defile
That yokes the mountains yonder, you shall see
The anchorage that cradled Norman venture.
The Lady Gabrielle had best remain
In this more sheltered spot till we return;
And Sintram will be proud to play the squire.

Sintram.

[*To Gabrielle.*

Most gladly will I serve her.

Asmodeus.

So will I.

This mountain climbing is not to my taste.

Montfaucon.

My lady, will you be content to stay?

Gabrielle.

We shall await you on this ledge of rocks,
But do not linger.

Bjorn.

We shall not be gone
Much longer than the space that shall bring round
The shadow of this ash tree to your feet.

[*Exeunt Montfaucon and Bjorn.*

Asmodeus.

The Baron seems at home among these cliffs
That threaten death to unfamiliar tread.

Gabrielle.

And yet he saw the light in Normandy;
Nor has he visited this land before.

Asmodeus.

He has the bearing of the rightful heir
Come back to claim a long lost heritage.

Gabrielle.

If the free breath that blows upon the Fjeld
Be an inheritance, it is his own

Sintram.

He said as much when first he spoke to me.
Deign but to set your foot upon my cloak,
[*He spreads his cloak upon the rock.*
I will enthrone you on this regal seat.

Gabrielle.

I hope your father will remember, Sir,
There are no frozen steeps in Normandy.

Asmodeus.

Lord Montfaucon rides well, there is no danger.

Sintram.

[*To Gabrielle.*

You say that in the duchy which you grace
Our icy wildernesses are unknown?

Gabrielle.

[*Laughing.*]

Oh, quite unknown! When the good sun withdraws
 His summer warmth, the air is chill and raw,
 While sea winds like your own bring fog and rain.
 Not long we lose the sight of meadow lands,
 Beneath a winding sheet. Spring soon returns
 And with it robins in the orchard trees,
 And blossoms on the bough. Still further south,
 In Gascony, where I wove marguerites
 With my young sisters, into crown and chain,
 Sitting beside a fountain whose warm brim
 Was kissed all the round year with laughing beams,
 We scarcely knew the touch of winter cold.

Sintram.

I do not wonder that you are so fair.

Asmodeus.

Helen had not such golden locks, I trow,
 When she set Greek and Trojan by the ears.

Gabrielle.

No Christian woman should receive the name
 Of Grecian Helen as a compliment.

Asmodeus.

Your squire keeps silence but agrees with me.

Sintram.

I do not know the tale of which you speak.

Asmodeus.

Not know the tale of Troy? Ill nurtured skalds
Have sung your songs of minstrelsy, my lord.

Sintram.

Our skalds but sing the sagas they have heard
If you remember it, why, sing it then.

Asmodeus.

A snatch or two of it may come to me,
For I have heard it in the banquet hall
Where linen-robed, in such harmonious folds
As made their motions music, men and maids
Sat crowned with violet and asphodel.
The chequered floor, whereon the daylight fell
Through grapevine trellises, was half concealed
With scattered rose leaves. Water slowly dropped
From the wide conch a Triton held aloft,
(A fabled monster of the deep, half man
Half fish) upon whose sinuous flanks and beard
Deceptive hues of sea-green touched the bronze.
Apples of gold hid in the glossy leaves
That screened the entrance of the cool retreat,
And mid-day glared unnoticed on the dust
And on the toil of the hot world without.

Sintram.

Such sights our Berserkers have ne'er described
When they returned from raids in the south sea.
They say no tide affects that sea of dreams
Which the enamoured moon beholds entranced.

Asmodeus.

Its waters bathe the shores where Helen dwelt.

Gabrielle.

You speak of them as one who knows them well.

Asmodeus.

I long have known her people, and have trod
 The desert and the sown about their coasts.
 I have beheld the islands bathed in light
 That issue from the turquoise wave at dawn,
 And sun their beauty like the water nymphs
 In shapes of splendour luscious to the eye.
 I have beheld the arid watercourse
 That waves scant verdure in the cruel drought,
 And columned temples rising o'er the vale
 Where hairy Pan blows on his pipe of reed.
 Such was the wondrous home where Helen lived.

Sintram.

Who was this Helen? Was she beautiful
 As Lady Gabrielle's reflection seen
 In a round shield all bossed and chipped with
 blows?

Asmodeus.

Her eyes were hued like Lady Gabrielle's,
 And on her forehead was a diadem—
 A hidden diadem—that gave her power
 To make all men her thralls. King Menelaus—
 Her husband—was engaged in distant wars,
 And she sat weaving, weaving at the loom;

While as she cast the shuttle back and forth,
The Queen of Beauty, (Goddess some have said)
A wondrous vision, near and tangible,
Spoke at her side: "Weave, weave, the spell of fate;
Cast to and fro the shuttle of thy loom.

[*Music.*]

All men are thine, since love is in thy gift,
Then live and love and conquer while you may."

Gabrielle.

How long Lord Folko tarries on the hills!

Sintram.

[*To Asmodeus.*]

What then, what happened then?

Asmodeus.

Then from the glade
That wound to Menelaus' palace came
A plaintive call upon a shepherd's flute.
She knew the sound that mingled with the voice
Of morn and eve. But now no shepherd boy
Blew as he went. It was a stranger Prince,
Young Paris, who, on hearing of the queen,
Came in disguise as Menelaus' guest,
And lost his heart when he beheld her face.
For at his side the same Enchantress stood,

[*Music.*]

As she who sang to Helen, and she said:
"The ship lies anchored on the tideless sea,
And youth is thine, and Helen may be thine."
I know a tower shall stand as long as Troy.
Weigh anchor, for the ship is on the sea.

Sintram.

[*To Gabrielle.*

If you will mount, my lady, I will guide
Your palfrey back to Framness; it is cold,
And you are trembling in the sudden chill.

Gabrielle.

The sun is hidden, let us wend our way
Unto the house.

Asmodeus.

I will not go with you.

Sintram.

[*To Page.*

Bring up White Cloud for Lady Gabrielle.

[*As the Page is about to go.*

Lead my horse, Page, for I will walk the way.
And when the Lord of Montfaucon returns,
Say I have borne the lady back to hall.

[*Sintram and Gabrielle move away.*

Asmodeus.

I do not need to go! the spell is cast;
And thou are netted in a silken web
That it will take a Frithiof's strength to break.

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

The Hall at Framness.

Montfaucon and Bjorn.

Montfaucon.

Your land whose virgin girdle is the sea
Doth hold herself aloof from intercourse.

Bjorn.

We Northmen are not strangers to the world.
Our ships, as you're aware, Lord Montfaucon,
Have taken us to many distant shores,
Nor would your smiling Duchy of Normandy
Have been your own if this had not been so.

Montfaucon.

Indeed, the conqueror's path has so far proved
The Northman's course. I thought of peaceful
ways,
Of busy craftsmen, and of merchant ships.
I've not observed that you have much of these.

Bjorn.

Of bartering and toiling little is thought
Where the free lance and falchion make men rich.

Montfaucon.

These are but primitive essays; true strength
Comes of the trained hand and the opulent mart.

Bjorn.

I marvel much to hear a belted knight
Speak with such warmth of trade.

Montfaucon.

Beyond the waters
That bound you to the South, there is a League
Of prosperous merchants known for worthiness.
They are my friends, and I shall draw the sword
When it is needful, to support those men.

Bjorn.

Your knightly sword!

Montfaucon.

Barons of Montfaucon
Have ever held themselves sole judges, Sir,
As to the use they made of their good blade.

Bjorn.

Pardon me then, but you astonished me.

Montfaucon.

Nay, in all friendliness.

[*He extends his hand.*

[*Enter Sintram.*

But since we touch
Upon the subject, I should like to know
If there be in these parts a haunted house

Of which my friends Gothard and Rudolph Lentz
Told me a tale that I should not believe
From other lips than theirs.

Bjorn.

There may be such;
Our land is full of mysteries; the sun
Leaves us so oft, night holds a reign prolonged
Part of the year when evil holds full sway.

[Sintram sits down at some distance on a low stool, and is carving a drinking bowl during the dialogue.]

Montfaucon.

They hardly knew their whereabouts, were wrecked
Upon a harsh, inhospitable coast
Whose general description matches this.
And when they would have begged for shelter,
found——

Sintram.

They sought admittance to the Devil's hold.

Montfaucon.

You know the story. Do you know the place?

Sintram.

I know the tale as one remembers well
A vision seen in nightmare. There is more;
An angel saved your friends.

Montfaucon.

They told me so.

Sintram.

And one who would have been their murderer
Bound on his son an oath so terrible——

Bjorn.

Sintram, you're mad!

Sintram.

If so, whose fault is it?

[*To Montfaucon.*

He staked his son's soul on a throw of dice,—
And lost.

[*Exit Sintram.*

Montfaucon.

His manner would arouse suspicion
If I were not a guest, here in your house.

Bjorn.

You need not grope in darkness for a clue;
Bjorn of the Fiery eyes has never worn
The cloak of falsehood. If you want to avenge
Your trading burghers, it was at my hands
They nearly met their death, and here am I.

Montfaucon.

I guessed it, Bjorn.

Bjorn.

Well, then, let justice fall.
My panoply of arms I will not use.
I cannot cross with you.

[*He kneels.*

Montfaucon.

Although you breathe uncommon cruelty
If you be truly he that would have killed
Two men who asked your hospitality,
Yet you have offered Gabrielle and me
The shelter you denied them. Who am I
To be the avenger of an unwrought crime,
When I have broken bread beneath your roof?
Rise, Herser, I shall call you to account
When next you stain your honor, not till then.

Bjorn.

Our skalds have sung the deeds of Montfaucon
Whom none has ever vanquished, and I deemed
His steel could but inflict a glorious death,
Since I was twice debarred from meeting him
Unworthy, and unable, as his host.
Tomorrow we engage, on Niflung's Heath,
Jarl Eric's forces, and the challenge sent
To us on Christmas Eve, which we accepted then,
Will bring us to the trial of our strength,
That shall decide if we be freemen still.
Lord Folko, will you join in the affray?

Montfaucon.

Though not a partner to your lawless deeds,
I will not let my kinsman lack support
In any righteous grievance.

Bjorn.

Judge the cause.

We always have been masters of the Fjord.
Our ancestors were Vikings, as were thine;

And now we must submit to Haakon's son
 Who sets his heel on us till we cry "King!"
 We will defend our ancient liberties.

Montfaucon.

We Normans do not look with friendly eye
 On one who reigning in the Isle of France
 Lays just such claim. I'll not decline to fight.

[*Exeunt Montfaucon and Bjorn.*
 [*Enter Sintram and Rolf.*

Rolf.

Your friends who turned their backs on the attack
 Which they refused to countenance are here,
 And they beg speech of you.

[*Enter Harold, Ivar and Egil.*

Egil.

We've come to say,
 Sintram, you promised us a reckoning
 For leaving you to plunder Montfaucon.

Sintram.

I should be chary of my banter, then.

Harold.

It seems your cousin measured swords with you,
 And only spared you at a lady's plea.

Sintram.

You cannot have betaken yourselves far.

Ivar.

Nay, Sven and Sote hid among the rocks
And watched the issue.

Egil.

Check your fury, now.

Sintram.

How long do you expect me so to do?

Harold.

As long as to accept apologies.

Ivar.

You were deserted, and you fought alone.

Sintram.

I thought you spurned the enterprise.

Ivar.

Even so

We should not willingly have seen you fall.

Sintram.

I do not think there is a man alive
Can say I begged of him to share my fate:
It was disgrace I challenged, and I won.

Egil.

You talk most bitterly.

Sintram.

Then talk no more.
We fight tomorrow morn in Niflung's Heath,——

Harold.

And we go with you, Sintram.

Sintram.

Thank you, friends;
There honor's the reward, or all is lost.

CURTAIN

SCENE V

(Niflung's Heath.)

Enter Bjorn's men in confusion, wounded and defeated.

1st Man.

It goes against us, there is no hope now.

[Clash of arms and cries in the distance.

2nd Man.

I saw young Sintram as we fled. He fought
With mighty valor, but his luck has turned.

3rd Man.

Eric advances and our force gives way.

[Enter a wounded man.

1st Man.

How goes it where you came from?

Wounded Man.

They retreat,
And step by step move nearer to the sea.

2nd Man.

They'll be thrown into it.

Wounded Man.

The're strewn as thick
 As withered leaves before the gale, and Bjorn
 With ineffectual rage doth swing his axe,
 Though Thor himself were scarce more terrible.
 He rallies them a space, they hurl themselves
 At the resistance of unbroken lines,
 And blow away like foam.

[*Cries.*
 The Bear! The Bear!
 [Enter Sintram, Harold, Egil, and Ivar.

Sintram.

Lord Montfaucon has taken up his stand
 Against a rock. Backed by his followers,
 He holds the foe at bay. Bjorn drives his prey
 Upon the spear of Folko.

[Enter men in flight from all sides.
 Cowards! There
 The fight is going on, not here!

1st Man.

And yet,
 We find you here, my lord——

Sintram.

I came to stir
 A spark of fire in you and cry you back
 To glory from dishonorable flight.

2nd Man.

We fight as well as any, but they thrust
 Upon us with such force we must give way.

3rd Man.

We could not hold against that arrow-hail.

Sintram.

Cowards! If you would stiffen, even now,
Your panic stricken ranks, but for an hour,
To semblance of resolve, we'd beat them yet.

[*To Harold.*

I still believe if we could gather up
These ague-shaken churls that flee like deer,
We could support Lord Folko.

Egil.

From this place
You see the tide of battle ebb and flow.

Ivar.

Yes, over there is Eric, forging north—
To cut off our retreat—there, toward the wood!

Sintram.

I cannot understand it. On! Come on!
Will you stay here and have us all disgraced?
Will you see Gabrielle a prisoner?
She is on yonder hill in Folko's tent.

[*Murmurs.*

Egil.

[*He has kept his eyes on the battle.*
Their leader just has reached the knoll.

Sintram.

The King?

Egil.

Not Eric, but the man upon whose sword
 They cast their chance. Look at the golden helm
 Sweeping along above the flood of arms
 That's driving all before it. This is he
 Will rush them on to victory.

Sintram.

I see,
 But by the Angel Michael he shall not!

[*Turns to the men.*

If you lie there, then Eric with his foot
 Will make an end of you. Dash forth with me,
 Like hounds upon the wolf's track. You must die
 As women, nursing hurts [*murmurs*] if you hide
 here.
 And never strike another blow.

Men.

No! —No!
 We'll fight! We'll rout them! Sintram! Sintram!
 ho!

[*They rush out with Sintram at their head.*

CURTAIN

SCENE VI

The Edge of the Forest.

Center stage, the tent of Montfaucon. Gabrielle, attendants and guards.

Gabrielle.

The sound of fighting reaches far. They seem
To give fierce battle. Heaven defend my lord!
[She comes to the tent door.

1st Attendant.

Jarl Eric is a fearless chief, they say,
And he will have the whole land own him king.

Gabrielle.

All tell of his unconquered arm. Alas,
We can but hope with so few to support,
Our forces yet may win.

2nd Attendant.

Lord Montfaucon
Is in himself a host.

Gabrielle.

Heaven prosper him!

[Enter a Messenger.

Messenger.

A message for my lady.

Gabrielle.

Oh! What news?

Messenger.

Between the Heath and this, to bring you word—
I've crawled and swum and struggled like a rat.
Thus says my lord: "We're backed against a rock,
And here I take my stand. The enemy
Is still advancing. Rescue may be late.
If all goes ill, receive the King and ask
That he will let thee reach my ship. Farewell."

Gabrielle.

Go to your lord and tell him he must win.

[*Loud cries and a sound of trumpets.*

[*Exit Messenger.*

The tumult nears us, then let us make ready.

Guard.

That is the battle cry of Bjorn.

Attendant.

They come!

Gabrielle.

Whose banners dost thou see?

Guard.

The gold and blue
Of Montfaucon; the Bear of Bjorn.

[*Cries.*

The Bear!

[Enter Bjorn and Montfaucon in triumph at the head of their men. Sintram, (with Jarl Eric as his prisoner). Thore, Egil, Harold, Ivar, and others. Eric's followers as prisoners. Eric is riding bound.

Sintram.

We did but mean to show the King the stuff
Of which the men of Roga land are made.

[*To Sote.*

Set Eric loose and hold his stirrup,—so.

Bjorn.

We Hersers are free men, and free remain,
Lord King. But all in friendship.

Montfaucon.

Had the end

Proved other than it did, you would, I know,
Have acted as did we.

Jarl Eric.

I do not think

That your rebellion ever would have won
Such clemency of me as this reverse
Of ours has drawn from you.

Bjorn.

Lord Montfaucon.

I would present my cousin to the King.

Jarl Eric.

[*To Montfaucon.*

You are of France?

Montfaucon.

From Normandy, my Lord,
But kinsman to the Bjorn. My lady waits
Within, to pay her homage to the King.

[*They enter the tent together.*

Thore.

Why do they thus relent, just as they hold
The Stallion by the mane?

Ivar.

His standard shows
The stallion that has ravaged England's coasts.

Egil.

Sintram, who took him prisoner, declared
He would not for his maidenfeat consent
To do dishonor to the lawful King.

Harold.

His maidenfeat? Has he not fought before?

Egil.

Aye, but he never yet had seen pitched battle,
And he is moderate in victory.

Harold.

He has bethought him that the loving cup
Is fruitful of more profit than the sword.

Ivar.

Sintram is now swayed by a lady's eyes.

Thore.

Howe'er that be, he fought most valiantly.
The day had almost ended in defeat.
Jarl Eric's men surrounded us. The Bear
Was all but vanquished, though he snarled, and
showed

His mettle still, and like a sinking mast,
His banner wavered. Then alone, afoot,
Barehead, and battle-axe in hand, the boy
Sprang down into the thickest of the fray.
The ringing blows about him fell, but he,
Careless of all beside, strove steadily
To cut a swath until he reached the man
Who led their battle front, and struck him down
With such impetuous onslaught as defied
The opposing might of their defense. They broke,
And like a wave they rolled across the heath.

Ivar.

[*To Egil.*

You fought beside him?

Egil.

Yea, I saw him do it.

Confusion then made havoc in their host;
And we recovered, while, a prisoner,
Jarl Eric fell into young Sintram's hands.

[*Bjorn, Montfaucon and Sintram issue from the tent.*

Bjorn.

Jarl Eric, whom by courtesy we call
Our King, has been released.

Jarl Eric.

[*To Sintram.*

I honor, Sir,

Your very generous treatment. If a horse
You'll lend me for the journey, I will leave
Your company to revels of the hour,
And with my good Huscarl, ride on to-night.

Sintram.

If I may ask a question of you, Sir,
Who was the man whose marvellous prowess
Was well nigh fatal to our arms this day?

Jarl Eric.

That I cannot well answer. He appeared
Last night and no one saw him enter camp.
He said he could unfold your secret plans,
Which he described in accurate detail,
As the engagement demonstrated. Then
He offered counter strategy, whereon
My warriors all adopted his advice.
His strength was so prodigious that the men
Ascribed it to a superhuman arm.
And brave as you have shown yourself to be,
I should not think you had defeated him
Had I not with mine eyes seen him go down.

Bjorn.

Two trusty servants whom we sent to give
The Knight a Christian burial, returned
To say that searching all of Niflung's Heath,
They could not find his body anywhere.

[*Sintram crosses himself.*

[*To Jarl Eric.*

We'll enter into friendly treaty now,
Jarl Eric, by your leave, made stronger, each,
With help instead of hindrance from the other.

[*Sintram is conferring aside with the Jarls.*

Jarl Eric.

I solemnly consent to be your friend,
And the sworn ally of your dauntless son.

[*Page brings out a cup. Eric and Sintram drink. As Sintram takes the cup in his hand he suddenly becomes tense and absent, but rouses himself with an effort.*

Sintram.

My comrades then will act as hostages,
In pledge of our good faith; and these we keep
[*Pointing to the prisoners.*
Our prisoners, as a guaranty of yours.

Jarl Eric.

You have my word.

[*Turns to the horse that is brought out, and salutes Montfaucon.*

[*To Gabrielle.*

Farewell, thou noble dame.

[*Exeunt Eric, Ivar, Harold, Egil and the King's Huscarl.*

[*Sintram is unarmed by a Squire who takes his sword, helmet, and buckler; he then joins the others grouped outside. Gabrielle and Montfaucon enter the open tent.*

Gabrielle.

[*To Montfaucon.*

Oh, my good lord, right glad am I to see
Your face once more,

[*She begins to remove his armour.*

for I was torn with fear
When you sent me that word.

Montfaucon.

[*Approaches the door of tent.*

If I am here,

Alive now, safe and sound, and if the day
Has not gone down in black defeat the man
To thank for it stands there.

[*Montfaucon points to Sintram.*

[*Enter Bjorn and Thore into the tent.*

Bjorn.

[*Who has not heard.*

I'll seek my tent,

But leave my page with you to serve you both
In what you may desire.

[*Montfaucon is speaking apart with Gabrielle.*

Montfaucon.

Thank you, Sir Bjorn.

[*Minstrel strikes his harp as if to sing. Bjorn pauses.*

Before the minstrel sings of victory
A duty must be done. Sintram, come forth.

[*Montfaucon, Gabrielle, Sintram descend to*

center with their attendants. Meanwhile groups of men and women have formed outside.

[*To Gabrielle.*

Gird this young warrior, lady, with thy hand,
And I will knight him. He has won his spurs.

[*Sintram is entirely unarmed, but a squire approaches, bearing his helm, spear and buckler. Montfaucon speaks apart to a page who brings him from a chest of arms in the tent a sword with a gold baldric, which Montfaucon places in the hands of Gabrielle. She girds Sintram with the baldric over one shoulder, and the sword. Sintram then kneels before Montfaucon.*

For God's good service, and in the defence
Of Woman and the right, I dub thee Knight.

[*He gives Sintram the accolade. Sintram arms fully with spurs and helm, takes the spear from squire and lowers it before Gabrielle. She removes her silk girdle and attaches it to the spear-head.*

Gabrielle.

For holy Church and all good women, fight.

[*Sintram stands speechless. He then lowers the spear and puts his lips to the scarf.*

Sintram.

Whoever in our land accepts a sword
Becomes thereby the liegeman of the giver.

CURTAIN

SCENE VII

The Same.

Evening.

Gabrielle, Montfaucon and Sintram in the tent.
Gabrielle is playing on a lute.

Gabrielle.

[*To Sintram.*

You are so much unlike the lawless boy
Who greeted our arrival with the sword,
I'll not deny you now, the use of this,

[*Gives him the lute.*

To sing the song you have within your heart.
You are a Bard, Sir Sintram, and must sing,
Like glossy-throated blackbirds in the thorn.

Sintram.

That you do ask it, lady, is enough.
Not on your lute. And yet I have a song
I lately made, that I will sing to you.

[*To Page.*

Fetch from my tent the harp you'll find there, boy.
[*Exit Page, and returns with the harp. In the*
interval, Gabrielle has been playing in
silence.

Sintram.

[*Taking the harp.*

I carved this of the wood of Igdrasil,
The tree of life, that gives both life and death.

[*He sings.*

Ride, ho! Ride, ho! Whither art thou going?
Sword and spur, sword and spur, is it of my
knowing?

While the blossoms fall like snow,
To the distant shores I go,
Where the May is blowing.
Long-boat, long-boat, whither art thou driving?
Through the gates of the West where the sun is
diving.
When he sinks the day is done;
Stars, I'll sail without the sun
To my lone arriving.

Gabrielle.

Sintram, thy song doth suit my fancy well.

[*Sings.*

To the distant shores I go
Where the May is blowing.

[*To Montfaucon.*

Shall we not soon revisit them, my Lord?
I long to see the shores of Normandy.

Montfaucon.

We now with safety can return to France,
And we shall sail if such is your desire,
Though with regret we leave our cousins here.

Sintram.

As with regret your cousins see you leave.
Goodnight, the hour is late.

Montfaucon.

Thou hast the soul of poesy in thee.
Grand merci, boy,

[*Lights are brought in. Sintram kisses the hand of Gabrielle and leaves the tent. The curtains are slowly dropped behind him.*

Sintram.

The night of which I sang enshrouds my sight.
The devils held in bondage to my will
Are now let loose. I will not fight them, no.
Let them come, all! If she must leave me, then
I'll fight no more. Black spirits, one and all
Come, and we'll dance our Sabbath round on graves
Till with their howls the fiends arouse the dead.

[*Enter Rolf.*

Rolf.

What is this frantic outburst? Holy Saints!

Sintram.

Rolf, rid my path or I will strike thee.

Rolf.

Why,
Sintram, thou dost break all bounds of reason.

Sintram.

I know no bounds, I am destruction, I.

Rolf.

Thou art indeed destruction to thyself.
What has befallen?

Sintram.

Let me pass!

Rolf.

Not so;

Thou wilt go whirling down the precipice
That lies behind: hast thou forgotten it?

Sintram.

No memory have I, no thought but this:
While the blossoms fall like snow
To the distant shores I go,
Where the May is blowing.
And so a boat is putting out to sea,
Down to the sunset, bearing off my soul.

Rolf.

I cannot tell if thou be truly mad
Or else distraught with very sinful thoughts.
Thy father left thee much to me. I trained
Thy boyhood in the use of sword and lance.
And thou hast had severest discipline
Administered at this same hand, which thou
Hast taken like Bjorn's son with folded arms.
Canst thou not bide as well the blows of Fate?
Would that thou wert a boy again. I come
From Drontheim, where the Priest who doth confess
Thy mother,——

Sintram.

Name her not!

Rolf.

Why so?

Sintram.

Henceforth

She must forget she ever had a son,
Lest my unquiet spirit visit her.

Ah! Do not seek to hold me back. Stand off!
As well attempt to clutch the spinning moon.

[*Sintram tears away and Rolf sinks to his knees.*

CURTAIN

SCENE VIII

A Cliff above the Sea.

Distant sound of breakers and rising wind at intervals. The spot is wild and solitary, and about it are ruins of ancient tombs. Music.

Sintram.

It is not light or dark, not night or day.
How broad and still the bosom of the deep!
Canst thou rock misery to sleep, O Sea? . . .
I've ridden thee harder than any horse,
I've sought unknown horizons at thy call,
And courted wreck exultingly with thee.
Or when the bark was floating at thy will,
I have lain down upon thy heart and slept,
With naught but gull-cries on the solitude
To break thy murmur pulsing in my ear.
Now, let me leap to thine embrace and sink
Till earth's forgotten,—till all things become
As empty shells swept by the tide.

[He approaches the edge of the cliff, and as he does so, groans are heard.

Whose voice

Sounds in the brake?

Asmodeus.

[Unseen.

The echo of thine own.

Sintram.

I do not weep . . .

Asmodeus.

Ha! Ha!

Sintram.

Nor do I laugh.
What mirth should thus arise from the dry grass
That rustles in the wind?

Asmodeus.

Like it ye are!
Green at the morn, then sear.

Sintram.

What art thou, speak!

Asmodeus.

Ah! Some would shed salt tears to see thee cast
Thy goodly purse of gold into the sea
While men are starving: therefore do I laugh.
And some would laugh to see thee standing there,
Ready and willing to destroy thyself,
And therefore do I groan. If thou shouldst leap
To close thy nuptials with the fickle brine
Thou'dst leave but little glory to thy name.

Sintram.

About this place are tombs of heroes strewn,
Who reaped their laurels in the great ordeal,
And were borne up to Walhall or to Heaven,
Whiche'er it be. One such hour have I known.

Asmodeus.

Nay, never think of that fine baldric, now,
Your adversary has not been interred.

Sintram.

We sought to give him burial where he fell,
But could not find him.

Asmodeus.

No. Six foot of earth
Should scarcely cover him whom you engaged.

[He rises and discovers himself.]

You sorry Christian Knight! Upon the field
Your valor wears impostor's panoply;
I am the man you thought you overcame
On Niflung's Heath. I let you win the day,
That so your vaunted dignity might be
Unhorsed and bite the dust beneath my tread.
Thou art stripped naked of thine honors now.

Sintram.

So am I shorn of all.

Asmodeus.

And what of that?
I fooled thee in good part, I am thy friend.

Sintram.

Alas!

Asmodeus.

Stay, I will prove it to thee.

Sintram.

Peace.

Asmodeus.

Thou'rt like a candle burning itself out
And spluttering at the socket.

[*Sintram makes a gesture of despair.*
Hear me,—

Sintram.

Nay,

What more hast thou to wreak upon me?

Asmodeus.

Bah!

Thou dost resent my frankness. I but said
The truth.

Sintram.

Who should divine why you have spared
My life, unless to revel in the sight
Of ruin slowly wrought!

Asmodeus.

You are in love.
And like a man who seeks another face
To ease regret, you sought the inconstant sea.
But what if I indeed should prove a friend?
A wizard of the tempest? I can set
A foaming fury round about the Fjord
Whose fangs shall threaten Folko's purpose till
Winter's upon him and he cannot go.

Sintram.

Thou wicked boaster! Is the storm thy slave?

Asmodeus.

Not so, by any means. Herein thou must
Lend me thine aid; and if thy steadfast will
Be fixed to keep thy loved one in thy sight,—

Sintram.

What wilt thou have for this?

Asmodeus.

A lock of thine.

One of those black, unruly strands that whip
Thy cheek.

Sintram.

That is not much.

Asmodeus.

It is enough.

[*Sintram draws his dagger and cuts off a lock of his hair which he gives to Asmodeus and then throws his dagger into the sea. Smoke envelopes Asmodeus: and streams to skyward, while heavy clouds begin to float across the moon. The sound of breakers grows louder rising with music, mysterious and bewitching, till it breaks into a storm of unbridled violence. At the last, Sintram and Asmodeus stand in darkness, illuminated at intervals by flashes of lightning, and silhouetted against the sky.*

Asmodeus.

And now, come out upon the very brink,
Look on the wealthy cargoes that pay toll,
And drowning men who call to heaven in vain ;
Look down as I do, as the granite rock
That splits the timber, rue not, pity not,
But wish with all thy soul thy love may be
Storm-bound within thy grasp till Winter come.

CURTAIN

SCENE IX

The Tent of Montfaucon.

Morning.

Gabrielle, Montfaucon, and a Page.

Page.

Lord Bjorn sent me to serve you.

Montfaucon.

Many thanks.

Gabrielle.

Who ever saw so wild a night?

Montfaucon.

Not I.

[*Page blows out the light. He then busies himself about the tent while a woman attendant entering from the inner tent proceeds to braid Gabrielle's hair.*

Woman.

The storm seems to abate.

Montfaucon.

[*To Page.*

Where is thy lord?

Page.

Which lord?

Montfaucon.

Sir Bjorn.

Page.

He rides abroad this morn.

He rose an hour ago, went ranting on,
And soon as light appeared, rode out to see
How much of what he owned the storm destroyed.
He's in no merry mood, I warrant you.

Montfaucon.

Since quiet reigns again, my lady and I
Will take the rest we have not yet enjoyed.
Do likewise, Page.

Gabrielle.

Yes, little Page, go sleep.
For this has been a night full of alarms
As any witch's tale.

Page.

My Grandam tells
The story of a Knight who sold his soul
To win a lady's grace. The Fiend then comes
For payment, and in such a storm as this,
'Mid fiery claps of thunder takes his soul.

Gabrielle.

[*Laughing.*
That was a dreadful tale thy Grandam told.
No man should lose his soul for woman's love.

[*Page raises the arras and exit Gabrielle to the inner tent.*

[*Enter Sintram. He overhears and stands transfixed. He does not at first see Montfaucon who is lying on the couch of skins.*

Page.

Oh! my lord Sintram! Just as you came in,
I took you for that grimly Knight you killed,
[*Sintram starts.*
Who wore upon his helm a golden horn.

Sintram.

Be gone, and let me not set eyes on thee!
Unless thou wouldest be parted from thy tongue.
[*Exit Page. Sintram sees Montfaucon.*

Montfaucon.

You rate the boy right fiercely, now, Sir Knight.
Perhaps if you but looked into that shield,
Where your reflected image falls, you'd see
He is not in the likeness much at fault.

[*Sintram goes to the shield, sees himself in it and staggers.*

Montfaucon.

Where hast thou been,—cloakless, barehead, unarmed,
Through the long hours of this unholy night?
The very elements are in revolt;
Trees are uprooted, raging waters swell
To flood-tide, lightning strikes the farms,

And through the murderous strife, 'twixt heaven
and hell
The demons were heard howling. In his fear
Thy horse all night has whinnied, boding ill,
And thine own hound scarce knows thee.

Sintram.

That may be.

Montfaucon.

Rebellious vapors drift across the sky,
And rally to the bugles of the wind.
I hear the uproar of the battered pines,
The shriek of sea mews and the mounting wrath
Of billows that an incantation swells.
Magic of no good auspice,—Wrought by whom?

Sintram.

[*Controlling himself with a powerful effort.*
I am a herald, Lord of Montfaucon,
Appointed to the office by a king.

Montfaucon.

Come, art thou sane?

Sintram.

As sane as thou, and so
I'll make a proclamation in thine ear:
Hear! There is no such thing as victory.

Montfaucon.

Sintram, beware! He who attempts to break
The table of stone is made to suffer for it,
And league with darkness leads but to defeat.

[*Exit Montfaucon.*]

Sintram.

“No man should lose his soul for woman’s love.”
Those were the words she said: Then what of me?

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE I

*Winter.—A forge on the Domain of Framness.
Armourers working at the forge. Enter Montfaucon and Gabrielle.*

1st Armourer.

The autumn gales have yielded to the spell
Of Winter, Montfaucon is snow-bound here.

Montfaucon.

[Apart.]

Whose incantations drew the circle round?

[The men see Montfaucon.]

2nd Man.

They say this Norman Lord hath outdone all
In feats of chivalry.

Gabrielle.

Your fame has spread.

3rd Man.

He dances better than the sturdiest son
Of these old Fjords.

1st Man.

Indeed, he dances well.

4th Man.

The javelin that he threw, scarce Thambarskelver
Would have consented to essay.

Gabrielle.

My lord,

Methinks your northern kin will turn your head.

1st Man.

And that long dirk he carries, Bjorn brought out
To offer him, "For Sintram," so he says,
"Will never wield it as his cousin does,
When I am gone."

Montfaucon.

It was a compliment

I could have spared, but could not well refuse.

Gabrielle.

Did Sintram know of this?

Montfaucon.

"Some day," he said,
"We'll try it, who can tell."

Gabrielle.

He hath dark moods.

Montfaucon.

Dark as the raven's wing upon his helm.

Gabrielle.

Yet he is gentle too. He makes me feel
 As if a garden open to the sun,
 Were suddenly deep buried in the snow,
 While birds with song half sung stopped short and
 fell
 Frozen, and all the little things that chirp
 So gaily in the grass were hushed as now.

2nd Man.

[*To Montfaucon.*

There is a trial in which thou art not proven,
 Thou Knight of Normandy. We fain would see
 The skis upon thy feet, and fleeting down
 The icy banks, we'd have thee outstrip Sintram.

1st Man.

Ah! Sintram on the ice is like the god
 Whose breath slew Balder!

Montfaucon.

He is like the storm.

3rd Man.

And we would have thee, Lord of Montfaucon,
 Bring back the bear's claw, even as Sintram did.

Gabrielle.

You will perform this feat?

Montfaucon.

If so you wish.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The Hall at Framness.

Bjorn, Sintram, Montfaucon, Gabrielle, Rolf, and attendants of both houses. They are discovered before a huge fireplace, in different attitudes of familiar relaxation: Some playing games, others singing, one playing an instrument, etc. Gabrielle is embroidering.

Song.

(Sung in parts)

Fierce is the voice of the storm,
But fiercer the warrior's cry;
As he rings hard blows on the mail,
Sinks the foe to the realm of Ran.

Cold are the ice and the snow,
That wrap the earth like a shroud;
But colder the shroud of the dead
As they lie in the lap of the earth.

Red is the sparkle of wine,
And red is the warrior's blood,
And red is the glow of the fire,
And red is the love of the heart.

[Bjorn and Montfaucon are conversing apart. There is an empty seat by the fire. Gabrielle is embroidering, and Sintram is watching her.

Sintram.

What do you paint with your light needle, Madam?

Gabrielle.

This is an orchard close in Normandy,
And these are apple blossoms, see you not?

[*Music.*]

Bjorn.

Is it forever Spring in Normandy?

Gabrielle.

Indeed not so. Our winter days are chill
And very dull.

Sintram.

Not duller than our own.

Montfaucon.

We are not bound by snow and ice, in France,
[*Significantly.*]

As here we are since winter's reign set in,
So close upon the heel of autumn gales.

[*Sintram becomes somber.*]

Bjorn.

Sir Folko, when you came, you did not think
You would thus long be here to hearten us.

Montfaucon.

I feel as one who breathes the homeland air,
And to his mother is a child again.

*Rolf.**[To Montfaucon.]*

You are like Balder, the bright sun, who bursts
In golden armor on the winter world.
But, Oh! remember even he was not
Proof against arrows flying in the dark.

Montfaucon.

Know you of aught?

Bjorn.

Why entertain the thought?
On Folko's safety I engaged my word.

Rolf.

I mind me how all earthly honors fail
And fear the passing of so fair a fame.

Montfaucon.

Thy wisdom shall be treasured faithfully.

*Sintram.**[To Gabrielle.]*

When you are back in that bright home of yours,
Shall you return upon the wings of thought
To our pine forest and our sullen Fjord?

Gabrielle.

I often shall; could I forget them, ever?

Sintram.

You will remember them when happiest,
As dark things that you gladly left behind.

Gabrielle.

Oh! Think not so, for in the coming years,
We always shall remember Framness kindly.

Sintram.

The coming years! Who knows if any one
In coming years will light the hearth fire here?
We Northmen have short lives whose thread if not
Cut by the sword, is of uncertain spinning.
The Viking dies in harness or he blows
His breath out battling with the elements.
We fight the Giants on the mountain height
Where rolls the bank of snow in thunder down,
And we are buried with the hurtled rocks
In yawning clefts where never shines the sun.
Or on the galley when a sudden storm
Makes the ship drunk as the relentless winds
Ravel the cordage, we go reeling down;
Or on the dreary Fjeldt, where not a hut
Is seen for many days, we go astray,
And starve, while standing empty-saddled near,
Our steed pricks ears to hear the plover's cry.

Gabrielle.

Why will you dwell upon such gloomy thoughts?
Nay, you shall tread the halls of Montfaucon,
Some day when you're our guest, as we are yours.

[*Sintram moves away and stands near Bjorn
who is sitting by the fire opposite the empty
seat.*

Bjorn.

The logs are started, throw another on.
Would she who should have sat beside the hearth
Were in her seat! [He chokes a sob.

[*Sintram leans over the back of Bjorn's chair, gazing absently into the fire.*

Sinram.

None ever sits there now.
See how the bark falls off, and how the wood
Like outstretched arms is naked to the flame,
Still straining forth to escape the blazing penance
That wraps it round until it sink to ash.

A Norman Maid.

[*To a Norseman.*
We've apples here to roast, and good strong mead
To drink.

Norseman.

Damsel, your cheek doth seem to me
An apple such as Adam was denied.

Maid.

Forbidden fruit hath never brought good luck.

Man

To taste that fruit I'd challenge any fate.

Maid.

It did of Adam make a sadder man.

Man.

A sadder and a wiser. See the Snake

[Enter Asmodeus.

Comes in once more.

Maid.

And I believe the Snake
Approaches Sintram.

Man.

He hath whispered me
To take a chance.

[He tries to kiss her and she brushes him aside
laughing.

Maid.

What says he to your master?

Man.

He whispers in his ear of apples too.

[Gabrielle passes near them.

Maid.

It were of lilies, not of apples then.

Asmodeus.

[To Sintram.

How dost thou, Sintram, on this wintry day?

Sintram.

You bring the storm within doors.

*Asmodeus.**[Shaking the snow from him.*

Yes, I do.

*[To a Norwegian who is mending a pair of
skiis.*

Dost thou kill time mending thy skiis, young man?

*Norwegian.*These are a pair my lord will lend his guest
Who has none, as they wear them not in France.*Asmodeus.*

Lord Bjorn?

Sintram.

No, I.

Asmodeus.

What will he do with this?

Sintram.

We hunt the bear to-morrow, Folko's whim.

Asmodeus.

He has no practice in the use of skiis.

*Sintram.*I have been teaching him, and he is apt.
He will not be dissuaded from this hunt.*Asmodeus.*

Did you suggest it?

Sintram.

That I did not.

Norwegian.

A new thong should be put in this one. Look.

Sir,

Asmodeus.

Perhaps I have a strip of leather. Wait.

[*Produces a strap.*

Yes, here it is.

Sintram.

That strap will never hold
A weight like Folko's.

Asmodeus.

Yes, it will—a while.

Sintram.

A while—what mean you?

Asmodeus.

On a steep descent
It might give way.

Norwegian.

Sir, shall I put it in?

Asmodeus.

Yes, it is safe.

*Gabrielle.**[To Asmodeus.]*

Will you not join our game?
When you came in, we were about to dance.
For I propose my maids shall show you all
The rounds of Normandy, and you shall then
Show us the figures of your land.

Asmodeus.

Proceed.

[Dance.]

*[At first Gabrielle, Montfaucon, Sintram,
Bjorn and Asmodeus are grouped watching
the figures. Then Montfaucon leads out
Gabrielle.]*

*[During all of the following scene the dance
continues.]*

*Asmodeus.**[To Sintram.]*

You should have led her out.

Sintram.

I cannot dance.

Asmodeus.

Then you can play for them; where is your harp?

Sintram.

It lies untouched since all the strings are broken.

Asmodeus.

It could not well withstand your violence.

Bjorn.

[*Approaching Sintram.*

Have you again admitted him, my son?

Sintram.

He comes unbidden, I admit him not.

Asmodeus.

[*To Gabrielle.*

It seems your lord goes hunting on the morrow.
Do you not fear to let him take the risk
With his wild northern cousins?

Gabrielle.

Montfaucon

Does not consult me when adventure calls;
He is too much the Northman still, for that.

Asmodeus.

Does Sintram go with him?

Gabrielle.

Aye, wherefore ask?

He surely is no stranger to the sport.

Asmodeus.

But he should stay to keep you company.

Gabrielle.

Oh! We are used to finding of ourselves
Sufficient pastime till our lords return.

A Norman Man.

[*To a Norwegian Maid.*

[*Dancing a figure, Sintram is unseen of them.*
We go to hunt the bear to-morrow morn.
Will you wish me God-speed?

Maid.

With all my heart.

Man.

Your words are fair enough. But you have thoughts
Only for Sintram, and you see no other.

Maid.

How can you speak so?

Man.

Is it not the truth?

In all the rounds, while you have held my hand,
You sought but Sintram's glance and danced for
him.

While he!— You might as well be yonder
hound:
He cares for Skovemark.

Maid.

Doth he cherish aught?

I should rebuff you were such foolishness
Worth answering.

Man.

It is not foolishness,

And I am wroth.

Maid.

Why, what is it to thee?

Man.

So much, that I could, when he flies along
Upon his skis, wish they might shatter him
On some steep—I could cut the thong myself.

Maid.

If thou shouldst touch him, I should kill thee for it.
[They walk out of hearing.

Sintram.

Would this be murder? The poor girl cried out
That she would kill him for the deed, and yet,
If I fell mangled to that hideous death,
Who e'er should trace the hand that sent me there?
I now bethink me, Folko's strap is weak,
And I must tell him it will never hold.

Asmodeus.

The Lady Gabrielle has rarely seemed
More beauteous than to-night?

Sintram.

She does not change,
For she is always beautiful.

Asmodeus.

Indeed
Fair Helen's Paris has unchanging eyes.

Sintram.

Now, by my halidom, you shall not bring
That evil Saga back into my life.
I've done with it.

Asmodeus.

When steering into port
You cast aside your helmsman.

Sintram.

Steered by you,
'T would not take long to make the port of Hell.

Asmodeus.

You are in sight of it, or I mistake.
Go, then, tell Montfaucon his strap is weak.

Sintram.

Think you I'm Folko's Squire, or that I'll take
Orders from you?

[*He moves away.*

Asmodeus.

I scarcely thought you would.

[*He shakes a handful of gold pieces from his
wallet.*

This was a monarch's ransom when the North
Fell upon Rome. The Rovers strangled him
After they got his gold.

[*He selects a piece.*

Now, let us see:

Heads, Sintram speaks to him; tails, he does not.

[*He pitches the coin.*

CURTAIN

SCENE III

*A Cliff above the Fjord. A fir wood to the right.
Deep snow drifts about. Enter two huntsmen.*

1st Hunter.

How far will Sintram chase this brute?

2nd Hunter.

Who knows?
They've lost the trail since that last fall of snow,—

1st Hunter.

And all the hounds at fault.

2nd Hunter.

Excepting Skovemark;
He still pursues to seaward. See him now.
[Enter Sintram with Skovemark in leash.
[To Sintram.

You've leashed him, Sir?

Sintram.

For fear that he would dash
Over the cliff. How many are there left
Will not give o'er?

1st Hunter.

Two now, and we were ten.

Sintram.

But were not Bjorn and Montfaucon with you?

2nd Hunter.

Your father struck out over yonder swell,
Into the pine wood. Folko left him there
And skirted these black boulders through the gorge.
[*The baying of a hound is heard.*

1st Hunter.

That is Lord Folko's hound; I know his bay.

To Sintram.

He then must have recovered; Be alert,
And climb down on the hither side to watch.

[*Enter Montfaucon.**Montfaucon.*

The she-bear's den cannot be far away,
For with her cubs she has been hereabouts.

Sintram.

The men have seen her wintering in a cave
Not three days since.

[*Exeunt men.*

And those who sighted her
Declared they never saw so huge an one.

Montfaucon.

It is, no doubt, about these rocks she hides.

[*Horns and cries are heard in the distance.*

Montfaucon.

You know you promised me the trophy, boy,
I must cut off the claws for Gabrielle.

Sintram.

[*To Montfaucon.*

Hold, Folko, the descent is almost sheer;
Make ready with your blade: We have her now.
Look! There among the rocks, close by the sea.

[*Montfaucon bares his short sword, throws down his cloak and makes ready to descend, but stops to examine his skis and holds out his foot to Sintram.*

Montfaucon.

Sintram, how are the skis? Are they secure?

[*Enter Asmodeus, as a long shadow on the snow that only takes shape by degrees.*

Asmodeus.

There's nothing wrong with them. You need not fear.

The straps are sound.

[*Montfaucon bounds down the cliff and out of sight.*

Sintram.

Whose voice was that? Not mine.

[*Sees Asmodeus.*

Who gave you leave to speak?

Asmodeus.

Your silence did.

Sintram.

Or asked for your opinion? You know well
He is in peril, for you made the thong.
You know that it will never hold.

Asmodeus.

I spoke

To spare you fool's remorse, reserved for those
Who turn their backs on Paradise.

Sintram.

Like you.

Asmodeus.

Really, we need not quarrel over that.
For if not happy, I at least am free,
And you are neither.

Sintram.

No, nor am I yet

The thing that you would have me be, not yet.

Asmodeus.

I would but have you man enough to sweep
All obstacles aside and grasp your prize

Sintram.

Mine! Think you if I went to her all red
With Folko's blood she would behold my face?

Asmodeus.

"If he fell headlong to that hideous death,
How should she know the hand that sent him
there?"

Whose words were those? Answer.

[*Voice of Montfaucon in the distance.* O! Sintram, help!

[*Sintram starts forward, Asmodeus detains him.*

Sintram.

He calls to me. Let go!

Asmodeus.

While there was time
You did not save him. Now think of yourself,
For him, confronted with the wounded brute,
There is no chance, down in that narrow den
Where they have rolled together.

[*Voice of Montfaucon.* Sintram, help!

Asmodeus.

Your Helen waits for you. You do not know
How much you are to her—how easily—

Sintram.

[*Steps back.* His overweening pride was his undoing.

Asmodeus.

He never more will scorn you. Haste away!
Framness deserted, Gabrielle alone

With women, you can take her to your ship
Ere they shall bring her hero's body home.
Quick, do not waver.

Sintram.

He is hurt, mayhap
Mortally faint, he holds the bear at bay,
Whilst I—

Montfaucon.

Sir Sintram, help!

Sintram.

A belted knight—
[Enter *Weigand*.
And he,—What hath he done? He knighted me.
[Frenziedly.
Death walks abroad, who is to be his prey?

Sir Weigand.

As on the cliff I strayed, I heard a cry,
And far below I saw a wounded man
Who with his left arm and a broken blade
Held off the monster that bore down on him.
I could not with bare hands give help. He cried:
“My arm is crushed, my sword snapped in the fall.”

Sintram.

Oh God! He must have hurled into the cave!
[Asmodeus disappears.

Sir Weigand.

Aye, stones and snow were falling on him still.
Rush to him, Sintram, while he is alive.

Sintram.

Heaven be thanked, his life may yet be spared.
I'll save him, or I'll ride with thee to-night.

[*Sintram clammers down the side of the cliff
and out of sight.*

Sir Weigand.

[*Alone.*

With me. He takes me for my brother, Death.
The other one who rides upon the hills
And snatches men from their warm hearth to lie
In still forgetfulness. I wish he knew
I am not Death. This habit I must wear
Because it is a vow I made, to wear
The sackcloth that betokens penitence
For wrathful murder of a harmless man,
And on my gown the dead men's bones picked up
About the mountain, for they might be his.
So Sintram would have slain a noble man
Had I not dragged him from his purpose. Yea,
I saw the Shadow creeping on the snow.
Now, Devil, we are even, you and I.

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

A Wayside Shrine in the Wood. Gabrielle and her women grouped about the shrine. Men standing at a distance.

1st Man.

The dame of Montfaucon prays God for him.

2nd Man.

Well may she do so. He was rash to go
Upon this venture. Men grown old in sight
Of yonder wilds bade him let be the chase.

3rd Man.

That is the test of utmost hardihood,
And he a stranger to these parts.

1st Man.

He seems

No stranger; he is first among us all;
And even Sintram's spear is lowered to him.

3rd Man.

Do you believe that Sintram takes it ill?

2nd Man.

He is so glum of late. A thunder cloud
Hangs on him as it were.

1st Man.

I would not cross
The man when he looks so. They say—

4th Man.

Stand back!

They come in this direction.

Several.

Ho! Make way.

[*Gabrielle and the women descend to front.*

At the same time the hunting party enter from the side, Montfaucon, Bjorn, Sintram, Weigand, and hunters. Montfaucon is wounded and his arm in a sling. He leans on Sintram, who carries the bear's claws in his free hand. Weigand and Bjorn walk behind them.

Gabrielle.

[*Hastening to the side of Montfaucon.*
Oh, you are hurt!

Montfaucon.

Nay, it is but a scratch.
The bear was loath to part from me, you see.

Gabrielle.

You bleed.

Montfaucon.

Nought, nought. Sintram is fled to cover.
Come hither, Sintram.

[*Sintram approaches.*

Now, my love, salute

The hero of the chase.

[*Sintram shrinks back as Gabrielle advances.*

He then lays the bear's claws at the feet of Montfaucon.

Montfaucon.

[*To Sintram, pointing to the bear's claws.*

Good luck, not here!

Present the trophy to my lady, boy.

[*Sintram lays the trophy before Gabrielle, but does not look into her face.*

Montfaucon.

[*To all.*

Proclaim the slayer of the bear.

All.

Hail! Hail!—

[*Sintram stands motionless.*

Montfaucon.

Sintram, how now? Our hunter is abashed.

He was not overcome with laggard's fear

Like this when he leapt down into the den

Where I had fallen, and battled hand to hand

With bruin's wounded mate—no gentle foe.

I lay disabled with this broken arm.

He saved my life.

[*Cheers.*

Gabrielle.

Then, Sintram, you saved mine.

Sintram.

[*Regardless of her words.*

[*To the men.*

If you but knew who stands before you here
Your javelins would assail me, not your cheers.

1st Man.

Did I not say he had strange moods?

2nd Man.

He has.

Montfaucon.

[*To Sintram.*

Have you already grown so wild again?

[*Enter Asmodeus unobserved; he mingles with
the crowd and approaches Sintram.*

Asmodeus.

Now, do not play the fool: How should they know?

Bjorn.

[*To Sintram.*

What is the matter with thee? All this day
Thou'st been as one possessed!

Sintram.

Lord Montfaucon,

Wilt thou entreat thy lady to forego
Her ministering to thee for a space,
And grant me but a moment's speech with thee?

[*Montfaucon speaks apart to Gabrielle.*

Montfaucon.

I shall be with thee shortly, as thou wilt.

[*Exeunt severally, all but Bjorn, Sintram, Asmodeus and Weigand.*

Asmodeus.

[*To Sintram.*

I have a mind to let you go your way.

You are about to wreck your life.

Sintram.

I know

What I'm about. I am resolved to break
The shield in which you said you saw yourself.

[*Exit Asmodeus.*

[*To Sir Weigand as he is going out with the
others.*

You caught me by the hair, a drowning man——

Sir Weigand.

This is not he who rides upon the hills.

But one would cheat the Devil of his due.

[*Exit Sir Weigand.*

[*Enter Montfaucon.*

Montfaucon.

You spoke to me upon the way of dreams
That drive you from yourself; dismiss them now.

Sintram.

You shall command in everything but this.

Bjorn.

Methinks, O noble Baron, he is right;
For I observe a drifting in his way
Of late, as of a craft without a helm.

Sintram.

Aye, there is that left in me cries Away!
Such strength as nerves a man about to swoon
From loss of blood, in dim and fierce affray,
That he may drag himself aside to die.

Montfaucon.

Cousin, you must not prate so oft of death,
Such utterings smack too much of cowardice.

Sintram.

The safety of the vanquished lies in flight.

Montfaucon.

The voice that speaks to me is not thine own.

Sintram.

It but too well resembles Sintram's voice.
Advise no further, Knight of Montfaucon,
A lingering on the verge of ruin here.—

[*Music.*]

Amid the distant Mountains of the Moon,
My father has a stronghold built, they say
By other hands than human, long ago.
Depths the eye dareth not drop plumb away
From the foundations, daylight glances down
Into the court, and straightway sinks subdued,

While martial bareness lends the inner walls
The aspect of a cloister or a tomb.
And one or other it shall be to me.

Montfaucon.

Will thou live there alone?

Sintram.

The Castellan

Shall keep me company.

Bjorn.

That surly man!

None knows his parentage. He came to me
A gusty morn and said: "You seek a man
To be your warder, I will." Scarcely looked
Into my face. I liked his iron stamp
And knotted thews. He had a monstrous scar
Upon his head that should have been a crack
Through nape and temple, and outlived the blow.
Has served me since and opens not his lips.

Sintram.

Then he and I shall hold good fellowship.

CURTAIN

SCENE V

The Hall at Framness. Bjorn and Sintram. Sintram is making preparations for a journey.

Bjorn.

Wilt thou not say farewell to Gabrielle?

Sintram.

God keep her, I shall not see her again.

Bjorn.

Hast failed in due to her?

Sintram.

I never said
A word unmindful that she belted me.

Bjorn.

Wouldst thou have me believe this?

Sintram.

As you will.

Bjorn.

What hast thou done?

Sintram.

I sought to kill the man
Who is your guest.

Bjorn.

Folko?

[*Sintram makes a mute gesture of assent.*

When to my hall

He came, I swore whoever touched a hair

Of Folko's head should perish.

Sintram.

Keep thine oath.

Doubt not I'll welcome my deliverance.

I'd seek my own peace, if the old faith ruled.—

*Bjorn.*I attacked strangers, I did not assail
The guest who'd broken bread, and yet the curse
Hangs on us both.*Sintram.*

Thou canst revoke the doom.

I'm pledged by thee to Sin, then set me free
From that ignoble bondage. Thou'st betrayed
My secret soul to terror: break the chain
Which thou has forged.—Put me beyond that fear,
And I will stagger down into the arms
Of the appalling Shade that hunteth me . . .
Thou hast a sword.[Enter *Montfaucon*.]*Montfaucon.*Your wrath is loud, I heard.
You owe me fealty, since you have kneeled
To me, Lord Bjorn.

Bjorn.

Then deal with him yourself.
 [Exit *Bjorn.*

Sintram.

My life is forfeit, and I am prepared. . . .
 You erred the day that you conferred on me
 The Knightly Order, and you tried in vain
 To make a Christian of the son of Bjorn.
 I do not know what you have heard me say,
 But had I killed you, as I meant to do,
 You had not with a freer conscience died
 Than I, regarding her who gave me this.

[*He hands his sword to Montfaucon.*

Montfaucon.

You counted your blood cheap in yonder den.
 Let that be, Sintram, since your life is mine,
 Believe, I will not lightly trample on it.
 The sentence you have brought upon yourself
 Is silence: Live, and say no word of this.—

[*He hands back Sintram's sword and offers him his hand.*

[Exit *Montfaucon.*
 [Enter *Rolf.*

Rolf.

Skovemark is dead, my Lord.

Sintram.

Skovemark is dead!
 He got his wound to save me from those claws.

[*Points to the bear's claws.*

[*Apart.*

My heart was cheered by love of that poor dog;
His muzzle ever ready at my heel,
His tongue upon my hand.

[*To Rolf.*

Bury him deep,
Beneath the blasted oak tree where I stood
When Folko's ship was beached upon our shore.

Rolf.

Will you ride forth in arms, Sir?

Sintram.

Even so.

Rolf.

Your horse is ready.—Sintram, my dear lord,
Go first to Drontheim.

[He arms Sintram, who is passive; puts on his helmet, cloak and spurs, and hands him his shield. Sintram himself takes his spear from the wall, removes from it the scarf of Gabrielle and folds it in his bosom, then goes to the door.

Rolf.

Take you not your sword?

[Sintram girds it mechanically.

Sintram.

He'll pant no more in swift and eager chase,
Or hold dumb speech with me, or hear my voice;
He nevermore will strain a captive leash
To follow. Rolf, to-night I ride alone.

CURTAIN

SCENE VI

Night. The Castle of the Moon Rocks. A stately but half ruined stronghold. The walls are crumbling and open in places to the sky. A sail cloth protects one corner in the nature of a tent. A sound of hoofs is heard, then a horn and the letting down of drawbridge chains.

Enter Sintram and the Warden.

Warden.

Hearing the bugle of the Bjorn, methought
Thy father was approaching. It is long
Since he has visited this mouldy keep.
Thou art unlike Sir Bjorn, for gentleness
Is writ between thy brows.

SINTRAM.

My present temper
Hath little mildness. By the grace of Heaven,
My hand is stayed from murder and no more.

Warden.

It is a fearful thing to kill a man
That's not on his defense, to strike him down
With all his sins upon his head. So did
Sir Weigand, wouldst thou wander mad as he?

Sintram.

Sir Weigand sent the shepherd to his death
Because the churl denied a maiden's whim.
He struck in wrath, he never meant to kill.
I have far more to answer for than he;
And I should have blood-guilt upon me too
Had not Sir Weigand's hand withheld my own.

Warder.

The churl was murdered.

Sintram.

Weigand has been purged
By a whole lifetime of remorse and woe.

Warder.

If in his place of durance that poor man
Can see the dainty Lord who took his life,
That humbled glance, bowed head and bleaching
hair,
Why, then, perhaps he says unto himself
Fate, after all, is not unkind to him.

Sintram.

Thou hast a hard heart.

Warder.

And a harder head.

[*He draws a stool before the fire for Sintram
and fetches him a bowl of food.*
Wilt thou be warmed before the fire, and eat?

Sintram.

The journey has been long, through trackless woods,
For first I rode to Dronheim; I had need
Of speech with the good Prior, then came here.
How canst thou live amid these ruined walls?
And what defense against an enemy
Should such a stronghold offer?

[*Points to breaks in the wall.*

Warder.

This was done
When last Jarl Eric and his trusty men
Laid siege. They would have razed the place, but
scared
By rumors of your being on their track
They fled as suddenly as they had come.
Since then the hold has been dismantled, quite,
As all who had defended it were slain
Except myself, and me they left for dead.

Sintram.

What is this awning, tentlike, spread above?

Warder.

The sail of an old ship, for many years
The terror of the coast, which Bjorn had manned
For a descent on England, when our King
Was planning conquest. Now it checks the wind
That blows through all the creviced masonry,
The rain and snow.—

Sintram.

Strange place! Bleak as a camp,
Secluded as a hermitage. These woods,
Afford they game?

Warder.

Plenty of it, my lord.

Sintram.

We'll start upon the chase when daylight comes.

Warder.

Your chamber is made ready in the wing,
The turret that holds good against the storm.

Sintram.

A soldier under arms sleeps on his cloak.

[*Warder regards him curiously a moment then leaves him.*

[*Exit Warder.*

[*Sintram takes his seat by the fire that is dying down, and rests his head on his hands.*

[*Enter Weigand, clambering in through a breach in the wall.*

Sintram.

Dost thou still haunt me? I am ready now.
I fled the dire dishonor that o'ercast
My life at Framness, and I am alone,
With nothing more to fear or hope. Then, come,
And let us gallop through the dark amain.
Yea, thou hast been my shadow, in and out

Between the boles of the snow-laden firs.
 I scarce could make my war horse stumble on,—
 And overhead thy scythe that moweth down
 The harvests. I am weary. Let us go
 In quest of Peace. To horse! And we will search
 Through all the world until we find the Gate.
 We'll open it. We'll ride into the halls
 Where ghosts keep company, and till the dawn
 Splits the black dome, we'll hold a wild carouse;
 Come, brother, thou and I, now.

Sir Weigand.

You mistake,
 Sir, I am not the Pilgrim of the Hills
 But Weigand who must wander for his crime.

Sintram.

Oh! poor Sir Weigand! And what do you here?

Sir Weigand.

I often come when it is cold as now,
 To warm me by the fire, for I am numb.
 The Warder lets me in and says, "Come in,
 Near me thou nearest art to Hell." What mean
 His words?

Sintram.

They are no doubt a rusty key
 To secrets that he dungeons in his breast.
 His looks are sinister.

Sir Weigand.

Lord Montfaucon
 Is making ready to depart.

Sintram.

Yea, so?

What thought his wife of that my wordless going?

Sir Weigand.

He has explained to her your sudden leave
As taken at Bjorn's order to defend
This old and threatened fortalice: a task
Your Sire imposed on you for some offence:
She thinks you are beleaguered.

Sintram.

So I am.

Sir Weigand.

She spoke one eve to Folko, and she said:
"My heart is sorely wrung to think of him,
Alone in that grey keep, beset with foes;
Wilt thou not go and cheer him, ere we leave?"
He stood awhile in thought, and then replied:
"The penalty was not unmerited."

Sintram.

Most surely not.

Sir Weigand.

"Nay everyone deserves
A punishment in Holier Eyes," said she.

*Sintram.*And *then*, what did he answer?

Sir Weigand.

"I will go."

Sintram.

It burns me but to think he will come here
And drop an alms of mercy at her word.

Sir Weigand.

[*Puts his hand on Sintram's shoulder.*

Sintram, the man you wronged has proved himself
True Knight. Now, you would not be less than he?

[*Exit Sir Weigand within the castle.*

[*Enter Asmodeus.*

Asmodeus.

Good Morrow, my young Sir. How farest thou?

Sintram.

Who let you in?

Asmodeus.

No lowered bridge or bar.

A beck, and the portcullis rises swift,
A nod, the gate's ajar.

Sintram.

How came you here?

Asmodeus.

A grasp upon my jennet's fiery mane:
No leather,—Hand to neck and knee to flank.
So, my Lord Sintram, do I ride the storm.
With all thine arrogance, I feel thee shrink.
Thus do I flout the men who kneel to me.

Sintram.

Yes, I have dallied with thine evil spells,
Beshrew me for the folly of that hour!

Asmodeus.

A last chance offers to redeem thy pride.
Folko is at the gate. A spear might drop
From that old panoply thrown clangling down
By the rough jar of his approaching tread.

Sintram.

Whatever threatens shall not harm his head.

Asmodeus.

Your adversary comes to torture you.

Sintram.

Why should he not have worked his will on me
At Framness, when I was within his power?
He but confined me to the prison-house
Of mine own thoughts, albeit he little knew
What an accursed companion Silence is.
I shall endure it, and will kneel to him
If need be,—not to thee,—though pride and wrath
Engulf me!

[Exit *Asmodeus.*

[*Sounds of the raising of the portcullis, and approaching steps.*

[Enter *Warder.*

Warder.

Folko of Montfaucon is here.

[At the same time, enter *Montfaucon.*

Sintram.

Welcome, my lord.

Montfaucon.

Hail, Sintram.

[A spear falls from the panoply above the head of Montfaucon; Sintram catches it in the air and throws it down.]

Montfaucon.

Unseen hands

Impel disaster in this haunted place.

Sintram.

Whilst thou art in it, I am thy defence.

Montfaucon.

Thou hast strange mates here. As I crossed the moat,

A Shadow high as heaven gloomed all the stars,
And a huge scythe, like a dark rainbow, spanned
The battlements; while in the gallery,
I vow I saw him of the golden horn.

Sintram.

They dog my steps; I do not summon them.
Thou hast committed me to silence,—Speak,
Why dost thou seek this horrible retreat?
It cannot be thou never wert engaged
In deadly combat with one mightier;
It cannot be thou never hast been racked
With mortal anguish. If thou be so strong,
Wherfore come here to wound a fallen man?

Montfaucon.

Such speech is most unworthy of you, Sir.
Whose shield is honored without dint? What eye
Can stare unblinking in the face of pain?

Sintram.

We each have held the other's life suspended
A moment in the balance: neither struck.
And we look back on stern remembrances.
Try to forgive, and I'll try to forget.

Montfaucon.

Sintram, this is a gallant stand. Hold out
Against thy formidable Adversary,
Till tidings reach me in my distant land
That thou hast overcome the curse. That day,
The Lady Gabrielle shall crown thine arms.

[*They exchange a silent farewell.*
[*Exit Montfaucon.*

Sintram.

Try to forget! How shall I live to do it?
How can I do it and live? I gave my word.

CURTAIN

SCENE VII

The Cloister of the Monastery at Drontheim.
Reflection of a fire in the distance. Enter the Prior.
Cries.

Prior.

What are those cries, as of some wounded men?

[Enter Sintram.]

The fields are lurid and an angry glare
Lights up the sky.

[To Sintram.]

Who is to blame for this?

Sintram.

[Drearly.]

Half of the wretched business is a blank.

My father on a foray, sent for help

Against the bonders who resisted him.

He said a treasure cast up by the sea

Within their dingy hovel was concealed.

And waxing wroth that peasants should have seized

A Baron's prize, I gathered followers,

And plunged into a bloody massacre.

Women rolled shrieking under horses' hoofs,

Children were stabbed to death and houses burned.

At last they bound the bravest of the men

Together to await the axe's blow.

And Bjorn cried: "Sintram, now retrieve thy fame."
A Viking's right is thine. Be first to strike."
I do not know what demon drove my hand,
The axe was swung aloft,—A crimson light
Flashed on my eyes, their dying look to drown:
And the Dark Pilgrim stared me in the face.
"He sickens," cried they, "at the sight of blood."
Saith Bjorn, "This fit doth seize him unawares."
Then ere I could recover, with a look
Of most unmitigated scorn, he snatched
The battle axe out of my nerveless hand:
"Get thee to horse," he ordered. "Any man
May tear thee limb from limb." I rode away
And thus did I escape a just reward,
Spared to behold myself with sobered gaze.

Prior.

The berserk rage dies very hard in you.
How oft have you repented of such deeds,
And vowed to succor rather than to slay?

Sintram.

The very words I said confound me now.

Prior.

When it appears that you have overcome,
You stand before me steeped in guilt so deep
That suffering must be the road to pardon.

Sintram.

Is it not suffering to have a Shade
Hounding your steps with whispered villainy?

Prior.

Then, stop your ears.

Sintram.

Or is the seizure a light thing to bear
That throttles sense with unrealities?

Prior.

What! Yield to phantoms!

Sintram.

Nor are the memories so tamely brooked
That rankle in you like a broken spear.

Prior.

Ungird your baldric:
Go lay your sword on yonder altar step,
And mount a vigil o'er your sullied arms.
Then, weaponless, fare forth among the men
Whom you have wounded, and bind up their hurts.

Sintram.

It shall be done. If from their fevered beds
They rise and fell me, they'll do yeoman service.

Prior.

Pray for a faithful life, not facile death.
You shall resume your sword and use it well.

Sintram.

Not so. It never shall be used again,
The sword that Angel hands bestowed on me.
I brought thee, when I found it, Frithiof's blade,
To bless and keep for me, strange, elfin-wrought,
The same that Frithiof, driven to slay the man
Who stood 'twixt him and love, hurled over sea.

[*The Prior brings him the sword and Sintram takes it in his hands and points to the hilt that gleams with gems.*

Ah there it is, the magic carbuncle
Of Angurwadel, clear in loyal hands,
But dull and lifeless at the touch of treason.

[*He holds it up and the gem glows.*

No grasp but mine has e'er been laid on it,
Since that far day when Frithiof hurled it wide.
Its steel shall brace me with a hero's strength,
To fight and conquer every enemy.

CURTAIN

SCENE VIII

The Chapel of the Monastery at Drontheim.

No light but the Sanctuary lamp.
Sintram is discovered kneeling, heavily cloaked. On the altar steps lie his own sword and baldric, and also Angurwadel, that glows red where the magic carbuncle is set. He lights a taper at the lamp and sets it on a stall desk of the Choir. He then takes up his baldric, girds it, and hangs up his own sword, leaving Angurwadel where it lies.

Sintram.

Hang there forever, like a Cross of gold
To light my way. No sinful touch of mine
Shall dull thee more. The hand of Gabrielle
Has made thee holy. Blood shall never stain
Thy starry blade again. My belt I'll keep,
To gird me, and to guard me from disgrace.
Bright Angurwadel, thou and I will wage
Our warfare, and great Frithiof who has cast
Thy glory in my path shall lead me on.

[*He kneels again with the sword in his hand.*
A bell rings.

Be this the knell of all that in the past
Has chained me to myself. Lord, give me light.

[*Music.*

[A woman's figure is seen, dimly, standing on the altar steps beside him, it gradually takes the form of Gabrielle with an infant in her arms.

Sintram.

[Still kneeling.

Oh! is it possible that earthly eyes
Should see the Vision?

Gabrielle.

Knowest thou me not?

Sintram.

[Recognizing her.

I know thy face, thy name I dare not say.

Gabrielle.

It has been granted I should come to thee
With promise of good will from highest Heaven.
I have but lately trod the vale of death
And in my arms brought back my little son.

[Sintram rises to his feet.

I shall behold thy prowess, far away
In castled Normandy, and I shall bless
Thy victory. Do not forget the day,
Sintram, when thou wert girded for the fight.
Stand straight and strong.

[The vision fades away.

Sintram.

What can defeat me now!

[*Bell ringing.*

[Enter the monks, chanting Matins; Sintram stands aside in the shadow to let them pass, then kneels very humbly in the porch.

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE I

[*Eighteen years later.*]

The Hall at Framness.

Bjorn is discovered playing chess with Asmodeus.

Bjorn's hair is white and he is much aged.

Sound of a spurred footstep on the flags of the court.

Asmodeus.

Checkmate! That sounded like Sir Sintram's step.

[*Enter Sintram as a man of forty years, grave and self-possessed.*

Sintram.

Who gave you leave to come into this hall?

Bjorn.

He often cheers my loneliness, fair son.

Like your fair mother, you deserted me, . . .

You for your cloudy Castle of the Moon, . . .

And many a time he keeps me company.

He taught me this strange game which he brought
back

From distant regions on the earth's confine

Where men are clad in coats of rainbow hue,

And all is wondrous magic.

Sintram.

Then forbear!
They are not Christians who consort with him.

Asmodeus.

Did not our mighty Emperor Charlemagne
Force to the hunt and bring bedraggled back
The southern fops who visited his court
In garments decked with plumes of varied dye?
Those all were Christian men.

Sintram.

They may have been.
You wrest my meaning which you understand.

Asmodeus.

And there are Christian men who drink with me,
Lord Sintram, as you may perhaps recall.
Will you not play?

Sintram.

... Away, Sir, from this place!
[*Sintram strides up and sweeps the chess board
to the floor; Bjorn starts up and strikes him.*

Bjorn.

Is it for this you come into my house?
How dare you show such conduct to my guest,
And interfere with me?

Sintram.

Away, I say!
[*Exit Asmodeus.*

Sintram.

If he comes back we're lost without retrieve.

Bjorn.

If he does not come back, I'll call the men
And make short shrift of thee. Thou art alone.

Sintram.

That were a miserable end.

Bjorn.

Be warned.

He shall come in or——

Sintram.

While I am alive

He shall not enter here.

Bjorn.

I'll let him in.

[*Bjorn tries to reach the door, but Sintram intercepts him and they engage in a long silent struggle, hand to hand. Finally Sintram overpowers Bjorn and throws him back.*

Bjorn.

Sintram, take care! Go not too far with him.

Sintram.

Let him display his utmost fury now.

Bjorn.

He will not vent on thee his rightful ire
 At this rough insult—would not stoop to it.
 He has at all times been a friend to me.

Sintram.

My bitterest foe.

Bjorn.

Thou goadest me to rage.
 Why should he be?

Sintram.

We're lost if he returns.

Bjorn.

What senseless hate! Indeed I cannot see
 A reason for thy wrath but jealousy,
 Because, forsooth, he takes thine empty place.
 Indeed, as he sat there I often thought
 You looked not so unlike, although there is
 No semblance of it now.

Sintram.

The Saints forefend!

Bjorn.

He more than once hath said you did his bidding.

Asmodeus.

Will you deny you pledged me in this hall? [Returns.]

Sintram.

I did, and suffered untold agony
In consequence.

Asmodeus.

Your scruples are to blame,
Not I.

Sintram.

Seek not to parley with me, go.

Asmodeus.

[*To Bjorn.*
Are you the master of this place, or he?

Bjorn.

[*To Sintram.*

That we shall see. Leave here at once, or look
To be o'erpowered and brained.

Sintram.

You cannot shake
Mine armored steadfastness. I give my word
This Evil One shall cease from troubling us.

Bjorn.

Ho! Carls!

[Enter two men-at-arms. *Sintram interposes*
and points to Asmodeus.

Sintram.

His horse.

Asmodeus.

Until we meet again.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The Castle of the Moon Rocks

The Place has been restored, and gives a dim and lofty suggestion of Gothic architecture. Uncertain place and time. The walls are hung with banners.

Warder.

My lord comes not. He went to help old Bjorn
Who draws the sword. God grant him safe return.

[Sound of a horn.

[Exit Warder.

[Enter Sintram and the warder together.

Warder.

You are quite worn, Lord Sintram.

Sintram.

Nearly spent.

Warder.

And wounded.

Sintram.

Yes.

[Puts his hand to his shoulder.

Through all the dreary days
Of journeying here, it hath not seemed to heal.

Bjorn sent me word Kark broke upon his bounds.
Kark, the marauder, leagued with Arinbjorn,
Destroyed his barns and drove his cattle off.
I offered him protection, for he grows
Somewhat too old to fight without surcease
As was his wont. We fought them hard and long.
They gashed my harness. I am tired, man,
Tired of petty warfare. There were laid
Upon the sod more than a score of them,
Crime-sodden, desperate outlaws—sea wolves all,
Whom the good monks have tended or interred.

Warder.

Wilt thou turn monk, too, nursing common men?

Sintram.

[*Absently.*]

I have shed blood more often than I stanch'd it.

Warder.

Sir Knight, there is as great a change in you
As in this hold since at your bidding called,
The Master Builder and his masons came
And tore old shapes and shadows from the walls,—
All but the spear you would not let them touch.
It hangs where it hath always hung, right there.
One day it dropped, just after you arrived.
I found it on the floor.

Sintram.

I saw it fall.

Warder.

The banners of your victories adorn
The place, 'tis true. But I am ill at home
Amid these flaunting ribbons.

Sintram.

Where art thou
Much more at home than here? For thirty years
Thou didst serve Bjorn in silent solitude;
For eighteen more hast shared the roof with me,
Who scarcely am more talkative than thou.
In all that time, I never asked a word
Of thy dumb past. But there must be a clue
To thy mysterious silence. Who art thou?

Warder.

Not till your worship has become a priest
Need I reply to question such as this.

Sintram.

I am no priest or monk, nor e'er shall be.
My vows are to defend the right, and stand
Champion to those who are in need of me.

Warder.

Nobody asks you why you took that vow.

Sintram.

Such is the pledge of every Christian Knight.

Warder.

They do not all in Norseland keep the pledge,
Nor elsewhere either.

Sintram.

Recreant though we be,

It is for service that we gird the sword.

[*Exit Sintram.*][*Enter Sir Weigand.*]*Sir Weigand.*

Did I not hear Sir Sintram's voice?

Warder.

You did.

He just returned, wounded and spiritless.

Sir Weigand.

I watched the struggle from a hill: hard pressed
He was, and nearly murdered by the band
That sought to rob his father. Every year
Grown fiercer, Bjorn rests not from quarrelling,
And has no friends in Roga land. Alone
Of them who know him Sintram dare approach
The Bear, grown sick and dangerous with age.
He helped the monks to bury all the dead,
When darkness fell and none could see his face. . . .
Only the raven wings upon his crest
Spread loftily against the starlit sky,
An easy mark amid the bending cowl,
And the stark figures prone upon the snow,
Though Angurwadel was not at his side.
He bandaged those who let him minister
To their foul bodies, even carried them
As far as to the nearest farm or close
With aid of his retainers.

Warder.

It is strange
A Knight should stoop to such a menial task.

Sir Weigand.

He seems compelled by some bond unavowed,
More strict even than his knighthood.

Warder.

Here he comes.

Sintram.

Good Weigand, welcome.

Sir Weigand.

How dost thou, my friend?

Sintram.

Nor well nor ill. Is it not Christmas Eve?

Sir Weigand.

We had forgotten it.

Sintram.

There is little here
To bring it to your mind.

Sir Weigand.

More than you think.
[Bell chiming.

Sintram.

The blessing of the moon is on the snow,
And bells are pealing out upon the night—
“Glory to God and peace on earth to men.”

Warder.

Peace! Is there peace for men?

Sintram.

The peace that comes
Of duty done and evil deeds forgiven.

Sir Weigand.

Oh! Heaven, I wonder if repentance can
Wipe out the stain of blood?

Warder.

That stain is not
Upon thy hand.

Sir Weigand.

What dost thou know of it?

Warder.

I am the shepherd whom you struck that day.

Sir Weigand.

Thou here, alive? Could I but think it true;

Warder.

Dost thou remember how thy sword-blow fell
Across my head and down upon my chest?
Look at the seam, and know I am alive.

Sir Weigand.

Why hast thou goaded me through all these years?

Warder.

To punish for the stroke. I let thee writhe
Beneath the whip of thy remorse and grief,
Was well content that thou wert suffering.
All men believed me dead. A poor recluse
Who dwells among the hills recovered me
From madness and from death. But when I stood
Restored, I bound him to close secrecy,
And went my way a stranger to the world.

Sintram.

[*To Warder.*
This Holy Night thou hast redeemed thyself.

Sir Weigand.

I am no murderer! Good will to men!
Now I can go in peace. God give thee joy,
Sir Sintram! Now I am no murderer!
Now I can look Verena in the face
And send my soul out, kneeling at her feet.

[*Exit Sir Weigand.*
[*Knocking at the doors.*

Warder.

Someone is knocking.

[*Exit Warder.*]*Sintram.*

Is there peace for me,
Upon this earth, kind God! On such a night—
A King came here and bowed unto the dust
Of uttermost humility, to teach
That we must not be proud or merciless.
As at this time, the Prince of Glory lent
His spirit to our human flesh to shew
All erring spirits how to overcome.

[Enter the Prior of Drontheim and the Warder, carrying a wounded man on a litter with several men-at-arms in attendance.

[*Sintram kneels for benediction.*

Prior.[*Apart.*

I go upon a pilgrimage to Rome,
And stopped to give thee benediction, son.
Not far from here I found this wounded man.
The Brothers who accompany me I left
Out in the guard-room, for a word with thee—
Alone.—He must have met foul play.

Sintram.[*To a retainer.*

Fetch him some water.

[*They dispose the litter on the floor and Sintram stands aside to speak with the men. At*

the same time, the Warder approaches the Prior and speaks low and earnestly with him. The man-at-arms returns with a pitcher of water and Sintram puts it to the wounded man's lips.

Prior.

[*To Sintram.*

Spare me a short space
With this your Warder, who would speak with me.

Sintram.

[*To the men-at-arms.*

See to the care of those two Palmers, there.

[*Exeunt Prior, Warder and men.*

[*Sintram takes a lamp from the engle nook and examines the face of the wounded man who is lying motionless on the litter.*

Sintram.

The stars are making merry. Eighteen years
Have hardly changed the face of Rudolph Lentz.

Rudolph.

Who's he that called me?

Sintram.

One whom you have known
Amid such scenes as better are forgot.

[*He kneels to bandage Rudolph's wound.*

Rudolph.

Where am I, friend?

Sintram.

Lie still for you are sick.

Rudolph.

That draught revived me. Tell me where I am.

Sintram.

You have been rescued from the ruthless band
Of those who would have made an end of you.

Rudolph.

I now remember. Such are rarely seen
Even in your wilds. I rode across the heath
And they waylaid me. They were setting out
To raid some Herser's farm, and thought I might
Avail as hostage, should their fortunes fail.

Sintram.

[*Apart.*

The same, no doubt, that we drove off.

Rudolph.

I chose
An hour when they were drunk upon the road,
To slip their vigilance and gain the brush.
But once out of their cups they overtook
My flight and struck me down.

Sintram.

How came you there,
And whither were you bent?

Rudolph.

For Framness, where I seek
Sir Sintram.

Sintram.

What wouldst thou of him?

Rudolph.

They speak
Great things of Sintram and his high renown.
I go to Normandy, to Montfaucon,
Carrying carcanets and cloth of gold.
Lord Folko is his kinsman. My good ship
Awaits me at this hour. I met a man,
A weird dark man, who said he knew them both,
And told me Sintram, thither likewise bound,
Doth bide a chance to sail for Normandy.

[*Music and Voice.*

To the distant shores I go,
Where the May is blowing.

Sintram.

Who was it prompted thee to this? I say
Who prompted thee to this? I know, I know.
What need of secret malice? You're avenged;
The curse is almost more than man can bear.

Rudolph.

What curse? Good Heaven! You are beside
yourself.

Sintram.

It was his mother's prayer that set you free,
When you were wrecked, in danger of your life,

Assailed by madmen, in the Devil's hold.
But Sintram stood on an unchristian oath
To slaughter helpless strangers. He has paid
A heavy price for it, as well I know.
And now he makes some show of penitence,
Because he has been beaten to his knee.

Rudolph.

He was the boy who tore his followers on,
Like hellhounds in that demon-ridden place?

Sintram.

Upon a Christmas Eve, as it is now.

Rudolph.

How do you know—

Sintram.

It is a household tale.

[Enter *Prior* and *Warder*, hurriedly.

Prior.

We heard your cry and feared some evil chance.

Warder.

You seemed in much distress. What is it, Sir?

Sintram.

[Regaining composure.

I think I fell asleep and must have dreamed.

Rudolph.

[*Apart to Sintram.*
Forgive what gave you pain. No harm was meant.

Sintram.

[*Apart to Rudolph.*
The fault was mine. I spoke too hastily.

[*Aloud.*
Abide. This house shall be your own until
You have regained your strength enough to leave.
Give up the thought of Sintram's company,
And you shall be conducted to your ship.

[*To Warder.*
Bear him within, and take good care of him,
But do not let him know who is his host.

[*Warder calls a Retainer and they carry Rudolph into the castle.*

[*Prior and Sintram are left alone.*

Prior.

At Nidaros, I saw your mother, Sir.

[*Sintram bows his head.*
And in the silence of her cloister cell
She has been shown you must engage a fight
That shall assay you to the uttermost.
She bids you think that she will pray for you.

Sintram.

That word shall nerve my arm to victory.

Prior.

The gentle Sister has attended you
That lays her balm on wounds of battle, son:
Her name is Resignation.

Sintram.

Nay, good Father,
Her name is Fortitude.

Prior.

Her name is Love.

Sintram.

Love!

Prior.

The live coal that sets the incense free.
[Enter *Warder*.]

Warder.

Bjorn's henchman brings ill tidings.

Sintram.

Bid him in.
[Enter *Rolf*.]

Rolf.

Your father has but hours perhaps to live.
A sudden sickness seized him on the night
You left us. He has hardly spoken since.
I rode here without stop to bid you haste,
But am too weak to journey back with you.

Prior.

Mount horse, Sir Sintram, ere it is too late.
I cannot come with you, I must go on.
High obligation thus compels.

Rolf.

We called
A friar from Drontheim, but he would not hear
A word from him, and only calls for you.

*[The scene is darkened and when light returns,
the doors of the hall, rear center of stage are
wide open, discovering the court,—Rolf and
Sintram alone. Rolf is holding Sintram's
war horse. Sintram is at the door in full
armour. At the horse's head are red-oak
leaves.]*

Sinram.

Why did you deck with oak my horse's head?
That is a victor's wreath; I have no right
To such an honor.

Rolf.

I can scarcely tell.
From the great oak tree under which you stood
When Folko's ship approached, I took those leaves.
It seemed a fitting thing to put them there.

Sinram.

The moonlight tips them with white fire. They
show

Part light, part dark as shadows cleave the light.

[He mounts as the curtain falls.]

CURTAIN

SCENE III

The Death Valley. Night.

A Magic spell is on the scene. The wintry aspect of the landscape has disappeared, and in its stead the boughs wear the purple and russet tints of autumn. Dim light and stars. Clouds of fantastic contour.

Sintram.

A blast as from the very mouth of Hell
Has seared the virgin mantle of the earth
And made a smouldering ember of the wood.
These shapes that seem to float upon the air
Must be the work of a disordered brain.
The night grows dim, I'll rest my horse awhile.

[He dismounts, tethers his horse and lies down.

Enter Asmodeus.

Asmodeus.

Good e'en, my lord.

[Sintram rises on his elbow.

Sintram.

Wherefore address me so?
We are not on such terms of courtesy.

Asmodeus.

What would you have me say,—“Good even, Sir?”
Or, less than Knight: “How dost thou, man?”—or
 less,
If thou be less——

Sintram.

Yea, less, when on myself
I set reliance.

Asmodeus.

Was that saying learned
At Drontheim, to amend for thoughts profane?

Sintram.

Belike it was.

Asmodeus.

Well, thou art less the man,
By so much more the monk thou dost become.

Sintram.

I am no monk!

Asmodeus.

The son of Bjorn, perhaps
May some day wear the tonsure.

Sintram.

Do I seem
Cut on that pattern? do I look the monk?

Asmodeus.

No, no, at this I must rejoice. The sword
Is still in trusty hands; although I think
The use to which you put it nowadays
Is not all worthy of a Viking's son.

Sintram.

Thou meanest, worthy of thee! Since when art
thou
My master?

Asmodeus.

In some hours, admit I am.

Sintram.

Dread Visitor!—What is the end to be?—

Asmodeus.

I wonder.

Sintram.

Dost thou taunt me? Hear me, then,
I will not listen to thee any more.

Asmodeus.

[Draws a lute and sits down.
Thou'rt right. A truce, and I will sing to thee.

[Music. The theme of Sintram's song.
Voices sing fragments of it interlaced with
the theme. Asmodeus sings the last verse.

Asmodeus.

“To the distant shores I go,
Where the May is blowing.”

[*Music continues. Sintram lies back and pillows his head on his arms.*]

Sintram.

Who would believe an old, old love could thus
Tug at the heart? Wild dreams, half laid, arise,
Cry from the vanished years and shake my will.

[*Enter Death.*]

Death.

An air-born shape can have no power to harm.
What he would have thee do is dastardly.

[*Death appears as an ancient and venerable figure, richly clad in purple and gold. He carries an hour glass and a scythe. Through this scene the attitudes should suggest Perugino's Knight asleep between Duty and Pleasure.*]

Sintram.

My resolution wavers at the thought,
As at the buffets of a rising gale;
Or, rather, I am like a sinking ship,
With rocks ahead and hurricane astern.

[*Music ceases.*]

Death.

There is a Voice that can command the storm.

Asmodeus.

It curbs the elements that own its sway,
But there are tempests that obey it not.

[*Sintram hides his face.*

Asmodeus.

Since Gabrielle was thrown across thy path,
Was it so great a marvel to have thought
She should have loved, not Montfaucon, but thee?

Sintram.

How false, I have not so far lost my sense
As to be unaware;—I am not fit
To hold his stirrup.

[*He rises to his feet.*

Asmodeus.

Dost thou mean those words?

Death.

What are these fierce and vain imaginings!
Thy Summer passes, frost is on thee now.

Asmodeus.

Wouldst thou, if Lady Gabrielle were thine,
Neglect her thus, fair, as she still is fair,
To spend thy time in war with infidels
And council with old men? Those wintry streaks
Are but as hoar that nobler makes the fir.
Look at thyself as she would look on thee,
Sated with gazing upon Montfaucon.

Sintram.

Repentance does not save us from the rod.
 It was a stinging blow that Montfaucon
 Knew and forgave, but she has never known.
 Her innocence is as a veil that shrouds
 Her presence from the evil, and her eyes
 If ever they behold me in this life,
 Shall see the knight she belted straight and strong.
 So shall I stand before her, straight and strong.

Asmodeus.

I have already said thy victory
 Upon that day was not what men have thought.
 It was no triumph, since I let thee win.

Sintram.

[*Puts his hand to his breast.*

For all thou draw'st thy slime across my scarf,
 I none the less shall wear it next my heart,
 Whose fiery musing, like an angel's touch
 It still doth calm.

[*Sintram takes up his arms.*

Death.

Verena, pray for him.

Asmodeus.

It was a woman's, not an angel's hand,
 That girt thy baldric after Niflung's Heath.
 And as she spoke——

Sintram.

Let not thy lips repeat
The consecrated words she uttered then.

Asmodeus.

No need for it, the tide is setting in.

Sintram.

[*As if dreaming.*

A loose and floating robe of heavenly hue,
With gold at throat and hem fell from her height,
And blessed the sod. The warriors of my train
In awe and wonder stood about, whilst I
Bedazzled, as by looking at the sun,
Fell in a maze, and found no words to speak.

[*Death holds up the hour-glass. The scene
shifts to Niflung's Heath.*

Death.

In vanity, thy minutes waste away.

Sintram.

[*Kneels.*

De profundis clamavi ad te Domine.

[*Music in low Gregorian phrases.*
I have renounced the things of earth, and now
I shall obey thy call and follow thee.

[*Sintram mounts and turns his horse deliber-
ately to face Death. The features of Death
become livid and fleshless, gradually chang-
ing to a skull, and a wreath of serpents en-
twines the hourglass in his hand. At this
point the scene suggests Dürer's engraving of
The Knight and Death.*

Asmodeus.

Leap back, leap back! The summons is not yet!
 Follow not him, for he will lead thee down
 To darkness. Rudolph's ship is in the bay:

[*Exit Death.*]

Bound to the deck, if thou hast courage left.

[*The scene is darkened and shifts to show the castle of King Mark, and Tristram and Isolt at a window overlooking the sea.*]

See! See! For Gabrielle awaits her Knight,
 As did Isolt, Tristram of Lyonesse.
 Her window towers above a moonlit strand,
 As did the Queen's, and Montfaucon rides forth
 With all his knights in proud security.
 Was not an hour of bliss worth Mark's cold steel,
 And death an ecstasy of love? Leap back!
 The Castle of the Moon Rocks yet may be
 A palace of delight made wondrous fair
 By Venus, the Enchantress. Lo! She comes.

[*Enter Venus. All is dark but her illuminated figure.*]

Venus.

In Sparta's hall, on terraces of Troy,
 Through vales of Cypris my name is known.
 I sway thee by the stars that saw thy birth.
 I fed thee at the breast and fondled thee,
 In ages long gone by, when thou wert Paris.
 But I can parch the channels of thy life
 If thou shouldst spurn me, like the desert wind
 That piles the sand upon the caravan.

Sintram.

Better the cup of fire than slavery.

[Venus fades from view. Light returns and Sintram is discovered on his horse, with Death at his side.

Sintram.

Think of me now, thou who dost kneel for me.

Death.

A last time, I admonish thee: Withstand.

[Death disappears. The scene shifts to the shore where Montfaucon's ship landed. A huge oak roots in the rock above, and a flower is growing in the cleft of the stone. Sintram has dismounted and leads his horse. Asmodeus is at his side.

Sintram.

Sprung from the rock, this flower has offered up
Its frail existence to the unheeding day.—
Alone it lived, and taper like, blown out,
It will go down upon the wind alone.

Asmodeus.

In saintly meditation Sintram now
Drops one by one the beads of precious hours
When Helen might be his.

Sintram.

Ah! Thou dost well
Thus to remind me that the time is short,—
My mission unaccomplished.

Asmodeus.

Hast resigned
Thy manhood to the priests?

Sintram.

No, I have not,
Nor yet shall I surrender it to thee.

Asmodeus.

Thou usest boldness to thine only friend.
But I can see, beneath thy blustering,
That rifted oak is not more rent than thou.

Sintram.

Still it resists, opposing to the blast
Enduring strength; and eagles shall alight
For many a year on its unshaken top.
What though the lightning bolt has dropt and
seared?
Struck to the core, it scorns the gash and stands.

Asmodeus.

Thou boastest thus, while thou dost clench the grasp
Upon thy sword, lest thou forget thy vows.
How poor a thing thou art to challenge me!
Thou wilt not hide from me, for all the world
Is ruled by me. Thou canst not well escape.

Sintram.

The world is ruled by One who conquered thee
And all the devils of the realm of Hell!

[He draws his sword and makes the sign of the Cross with the blade in the air.]

Relentless spirit, that dost haunt my path,
By this most sacred Sign I challenge thee:
Thou art not Venus, no, nor Gabrielle;
Pronounce thy name as known in Holy Writ.

[Asmodeus disappears with a roll of thunder.]

Enter Death in his original form. A rosy cloud appears in the sky overhead. A knell is tolling.

Sintram.

Stern monitor, I now am wholly thine.

Death.

Not so. Thy glass is not yet run. But mount;
We must press on to Framness. Bjorn sets out
On the last journey. With him he shall go
Whom thou dost bring as thy Companion. Ride.
I go before, and I shall meet thee there.

Sintram.

Oh! What if I had not stood firm, what then?

Death.

Then Satan would have entered at thy gates,
And Bjorn had lost his soul.

[Music.]

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

The Hall at Framness.

Bjorn is lying on a couch. Verena is kneeling at his side.

Verena.

The Sub-Prior, sent from Drontheim, whom you
drove

Out of your presence told me to make haste,
And reach you to attend your sick-bed, Bjorn.

Bjorn.

The dying bear is not a gentle host.
It is a wonder that you came to me.

Verena.

Oh! I have wrestled for you in my prayers:
Near half my days were spent upon my knees.

Bjorn.

Why did you leave me? I might not have been
The beast I was if you had stayed, Verena!

Verena.

It was the only way to win reprieve.

Bjorn.

You left us to the Devil's mercies, wife.

Verena.

With the consent of your own lips I sought
The shelter of the Cross, when you gave up
Your house to nameless horror and to Sin.
You still may be restored and may atone.—

Bjorn.

This seizure is the last. I cannot live.
Sintram has not arrived.

Verena.

They sent for him.

Bjorn.

Too late.

Verena.

He will be here anon.

Bjorn.

Art sure

The door is shut? Sure it is not ajar,
And none may enter in unseen? I wish
Sintram were here.

Verena.

He will not tarry long
Think of your soul.

Bjorn.

Yea, I do think of it:
And so I pray you, go and shut the door.

Verena.

His mind is wandering, he does not know
His true condition. Dost thou hear my voice?

Bjorn.

Oh, yes, I hear thee. Would my son were here!
[*Verena kneels and prays silently.*

Verena.

[*Aloud.*

Suffer us not to fall away from Thee.

Bjorn.

There is a gate, but it will be shut to
If I do knock upon it.

Verena.

Nay, not so.

Bjorn.

The priest was telling Sintram of a door,
While I scarce marked, or thought of other things,—
And some went wailing with their lamps un-
trimmed,—

It was a wedding feast:—The door was shut.
Who comes?—It is ajar again.—Who comes?

Verena.

Be not affrighted; all is safe. Now, say—
“Forgive us”—

Bjorn.

How can I repeat such words!
How can the Lord forgive a life like mine!

[Enter Sintram with his bare sword in his hand, the carbuncle shining at the hilt. At sight of Verena he starts then kneels to her, as she advances to meet him, and tenderly kisses her hand.

Verena.

Sintram is here.

Bjorn.

Who comes with thee, my son?

Verena.

[*Apart.*

The rosy flush of youth is on his face,—
A glow as of another morn than earth's.

Sintram.

I am alone.

Bjorn.

No, thou art not alone;
An angel stands beside thee—

[*Death appears.*

Yes, I come.

[*He dies.*

[Enter a retainer.

Retainer.

A message from the Lord of Montfaucon.

[*Sintram silences him with a raised hand.*

CURTAIN

SCENE V

Christmas morning. The outer Court of Framness. Snow about. The Hall, low and primitive, is seen in the background. In the foreground is the gate, wide open. The sun is rising over the roof. Standing outside of the gate is Englestram with an attendant. Bjorn's retainers are grouped around them. A man-at-arms is holding Sintram's war horse that still has the oak leaves at its head.

Man.

Your horse is saddled as you ordered, Sir.

Sintram.

Where is Sir Folko's messenger?

Man.

He waits
Before the gate, and would not enter till
He spoke with you.

Sintram.

Fair youth, what would you have?

Englestram.

My father is the Lord of Montfaucon.
He bade me journey northward till I found
The Knight of Framness.

Sintram.

I am he.

Englestram.

And say:

"The Lady Gabrielle will crown thine arms

[*Sintram uncovers his head.*As I have promised thee. So she has sent
Her son to be thy squire, and learn of thee."[*Sintram puts his hand on the youth's shoulder,
as the youth takes the bridle of Sintram's war
horse, and they enter the gate together.*

CURTAIN



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